ANC
WEST
FEB.
15¢
DEATH VALLEY DESERT RAT
By JOHN A. THOMPSON
A THRILLING PUBLICATION
GUNS OF ARIZONA
An Exciting Book-Length Novel
By CHARLES N. HECKELMANN

Mason's New ZIPPER Shoe

Skyrockets your SALES and PROFITS!

Customers everywhere eager to buy these unique "Zip-On . . . Zip-Off" shoes RIGHT NOW!
Top quality glove-soft leather . . . Mason craftsmanship . . . astonishing Zipper shoes lead record-breaking Mason line of over 200 superb styles of dress, work, sport shoes for men and women, with Leather Jackets, Raincoats, and other fast-selling items. A line that maintains Mason's 44-year reputation for LEADERSHIP.

POWERFUL NATIONAL ADVERTISING

Powerful National Advertising in SATURDAY EVENING POST, ESQUIRE, AMERICAN LEGION . . . scores of other powerful National Magazines . . . paves the way for you.

SALES POTENTIAL TRIPLED

Cash in NOW. Help the people in your territory get highest quality, most comfortable exclusive Feature footwear they can ever buy for the money. Give them exclusive Personal Fitting Service and help yourself to a sweet, steady, ever-growing income!

GET SAMPLE OUTFIT *FREE!*

Sell the great Mason ZIPPER Shoe and hundreds of other newest styles and models! Get Big FREE Sample Outfit! Be first in your territory!

ZIPS ON
ZIPS OFF

SELL MASON'S GENUINE RUBBER RAINCOATS

Sells fast. Big profits for you! Guaranteed waterproof in heaviest rainstorms . . . thousands of customers all around you.

MASON'S LEATHER JACKETS

Keep profits rolling in with these soft, pliable, yet tough and warm, long-wearing Leather Jackets of specially dressed hides. Low Price — amazingly liberal commissions for you!

MASON'S MANY ADVANTAGES!

60,000 Pairs of Shoes!

You draw on our stock of 60,000 pairs of fine shoes in over 200 different styles plus immense daily factory-output. What a selection . . . *exact* size and width with perfect fit in the wanted style and color . . . *every* time! More shoes than your customers could find in many stores combined!

EVERY MASON SALESMAN AN EXPERT SHOE FITTER

Learn to fit every customer through Mason simple, accurate, easy-to-learn methods. Mason TRAINS YOU and makes you a Foot Expert and Certified Shoe Fitter. Mason helps you build a Big Money-Making, Permanent, Repeat Shoe Business!

MEN AND WOMEN WELCOME COMFORT OF
Air Cushioned Velvet-Eez

Show men and women exclusive Air-Cushioned Velvet-Eez shoes that cradle foot on 10,000 tiny air bubbles! Many report they sell on six out of every ten calls!

DON'T DELAY—MAIL TODAY

CLIP and MAIL COUPON NOW!

MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
Dept. M-760, Chippewa Falls, Wis.

RUSH me your great New Free Sample Outfit. Include your Automatic Selling Plan and send the book 5,000 Salesmen wrote for me. I want to become a Foot Expert and Certified Shoe Expert . . . and start making big money fast. Send everything FREE and Prepaid.

(My own shoe size is.....)

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

MASON SHOE MANUFACTURING CO.
Dept. M-760 Chippewa Falls, Wis.

To the man who wants to enjoy an ACCOUNTANT'S CAREER

IF you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period in your life? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of $3,000 to $10,000?

An accountant's duties are interesting, varied and of real worth to his employers. He has *standing!*

Do you feel that such things aren't for you? Well, don't be too sure. Very possibly they *can* be!

Why not, like so many before you, investigate LaSalle's modern Problem Method of training for an accountancy position?

Just suppose you were permitted to work in a large accounting house under the personal supervision of an expert accountant. Suppose, with his aid, you studied accounting principles and solved problems day by day—easy ones at first—then the more difficult ones. If you could do this—and if you could turn to him for advice as the problems became complex—soon you'd master them all.

That's the training you follow in principle under the LaSalle Problem Method.

You cover accountancy from the basic Principles right up through Accountancy Systems and Income Tax Procedure. Then you add C. P. A. Training and prepare for the C. P. A. examinations.

As you go along, you absorb the principles of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Statistical Control, Organization, Management and Finance.

Your progress is as speedy as you care to make it—depending on your own eagerness to learn and the time you spend in study.

Will recognition come? The only answer, as you know, is that success *does* come to the man who is really *trained.* It's possible your employers will notice your improvement in a very few weeks or months. Indeed, many LaSalle graduates have paid for their training—with increased earnings—before they have completed it! For accountants, who are trained in organization and management, are the executives of the future.

Write For This Free Book

For your own good, don't put off investigation of *all* the facts. Write for our free 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays." It'll prove that accountancy offers brilliant futures to those who aren't afraid of serious home study. Send us the coupon *now.*

Over 2300 Certified Public Accountants among LaSalle alumni

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

417 South Dearborn Street, Dept. 2329-H Chicago 5, Illinois

I want to be an accountant. Send me, without cost or obligation, the 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays," and full information about your accountancy training program.

*Name*_____

*Address*_____ *City*_____

*Position*_____ *Age*_____

WEST

Vol. 68, No. 1—FEBRUARY, 1948 A THRILLING PUBLICATION TWENTY-SECOND YEAR

COMPLETE NOVEL

GUNS OF ARIZONA

By Charles N. Heckelmann

While fighting side by side against raiding Apaches, Lieutenants Dallas and Holland are engaged in a bitter personal feud that is a dread harbinger of grim trouble and tragedy! *13*

SHORT STORIES

TRAIL TO PIE TOWN.....*by Jim Mayo* **73**
Dusty Barron finds you cannot talk peace to men who only understand force

THE WRONG HORSE.....*by Charles Stoddard* **89**
Shifty Wilson was sometimes just a mite careless about the lives of others

ZORRO SERENADES A SIREN.....*by Johnston McCulley* **92**
Don Diego Vega puts on his black cloak to battle black-hearted oppressors

FEATURES

THE CHUCK WAGON.....*by Foghorn Clancy* **6**
A ranch and rangeland gabfest conducted by America's foremost rodeo expert

DEATH VALLEY DESERT RAT.....*by John A. Thompson* **82**
Meet Prospector Tyler Barrett, one of the remaining ghost town old-timers

Published monthly and copyright, 1947, by Better Publications, Inc., N. L. Pines, President, at 9 So. Clinton St., Chicago 6, Ill. Editorial and executive offices, 10 East 40th St., New York 16, N. Y. Entered as second-class matter July 13, 1945, at the Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Title registered at U. S. Patent Office, Washington, D. C. Subscription yearly, $1.80; single copies, $.15; foreign postage extra. In corresponding with this publication please include your postal zone number, if any. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of any living person or existing institution is used it is a coincidence. Manuscripts must always be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes and are submitted at the author's risk. PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

KIT 1 (left) I send you Soldering Equipment and Radio Parts; show you how to do Radio Soldering; how to mount and connect Radio parts; give you practical experience.

KIT 2 (left) Early in my course I show you how to build this N. R. I. Tester with parts I send. It soon helps you fix neighborhood Radios and earn EXTRA money in spare time.

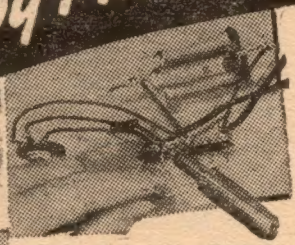
VETERANS

You can get this training in your own home under G.I. Bill. Mail coupon for full details.

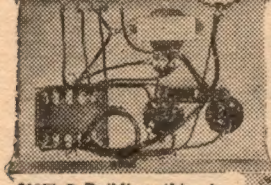
Be a RADIO Technician

Learn by PRACTICING in Spare Time

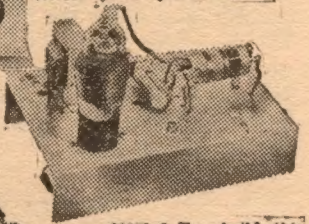
with BIG KITS of RADIO PARTS I send you



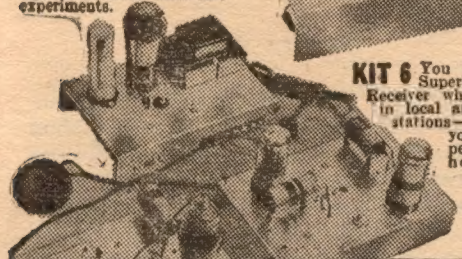
KIT 3 You get parts to build Radio Circuits; then test them; see how they work; learn how to design special circuits; how to locate and repair circuit defects.



KIT 4 You get parts to build this Vacuum Tube Power Pack; make changes which give you experience with packs of many kinds; learn to correct power pack troubles.



KIT 5 Building this A. M. Signal Generator gives you more valuable experience. It provides amplitude-modulated signals for many tests and experiments.



KIT 6 You build this Superheterodyne Receiver which brings in local and distant stations—and gives you more experience to help you win success in Radio.

My Course Includes Training in

TELEVISION • ELECTRONICS

FREQUENCY MODULATION

Do you want a good-pay job in the fast-growing Radio Industry—or your own Radio Shop? Mail the Coupon for a Sample Lesson and my 64-page book, "How to Be a Success in RADIO—Television, Electronics," both FREE. See how I will train you at home—how you get practical Radio experience building, testing Radio circuits with BIG KITS OF PARTS I send!

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute

Many Beginners Soon Make Extra Money in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll I start sending EXTRA MONEY manuals that show you how to make EXTRA money fixing neighbors' Radios in spare time while still learning! It's probably easier to get started now than ever before, because the Radio Repair Business is booming. Trained Radio Technicians also find profitable opportunities in Police, Aviation, Marine Radio, Broadcasting, Radio Manufacturing, Public Address work. Think of even greater opportunities as Television, FM, and Electronic devices become available to the public! Send for FREE books now!

Find Out What NRI Can Do For You

Mail Coupon for Sample Lesson and my FREE 64-page book. Read the details about my Course; letters from men I trained; see how quickly, easily you can get started. No obligation! Just MAIL COUPON NOW in envelope or paste on penny postal. **J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 8B09, National Radio Institute,** *Pioneer Home Study Radio School,* **Washington 9, D. C.**

Sample Lesson 64 Page Book **FREE**

Mr. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 8B09
National Radio Institute,
Washington 9, D. C.

Mail me FREE, Sample Lesson and 64-page book. (No salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Age.....

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State..
(Please include Post Office zone number)

Approved for Training under GI Bill

Conducted By FOGHORN CLANCY

America's Most Famous Rodeo Expert and Handicapper

HI WADDIES, seems good to feel the frost in the air! During 1947 we had one of the first rodeo seasons that I know of when it was so hot that it actually cut down the attendance at a lot of rodeos. Hot weather does not usually interfere with sports and entertainment. I have seen thousands of people at western and southwestern rodeos in sweltering heat, but never before this year did they seem to mind it. They would come in droves no matter how hot the weather—but let it be a bit chilly and the attendance at outdoor rodeos would drop almost to nothing. Football is one sport where cold weather does not seem to interfere with crowds attending. In this, football has it over most other sports.

Speaking of crowds, perhaps the greatest crowd on record at any one rodeo performance was the crowd at the 25th Annual Rodeo of the Sheriffs' Relief Association in Los Angeles. There were ninety thousand people at one time in the mammoth Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. On hand were hundreds of riders from sheriffs' posses from all corners of Los Angeles County, some of the nation's top cowhands and a scattering of motion picture celebrities.

A Rider of Thrills

Sheriff Eugene W. Biscailuz, resplendent in the Early California uniform of the Sheriff's Department posse, had as his guests Governor Warren and his family and Mayor Bowron.

Serving as queen of the rodeo was actress Janis Paige. Many of the greatest contract performers of rodeo were on hand to thrill the vast audience with clever trick roping and riding, fancy shooting and Roman standing races, while top professional rodeo cowboys thrilled the big crowd in riding outlaw broncs and Brahma bulls.

Gene Autry was guest star of the rodeo and with his horse "Champion" received many rounds of applause.

As the radio announcer would say, or does say, in many of the commercials, "something new has been added."

We now have plastic saddles. The first output of these new fangled outfits are being made in California. Roy Rogers has four of them with his rodeo, two white ones with black ornaments, and two red, white and blue saddles. The latter are used by Roy and his leading lady Dale Evans in their riding in the arena and they have bridles to match. The saddles of plastic resemble patent leather and any dirt or stains may be washed off easily with a wet cloth.

The 1948 rodeo season will start next year on the first day of the year with the Junior Chamber of Commerce Rodeo at Lakeland, Florida, which is billed for January 1st to 4th.

The season has usually started with the Western National Stock Show and Rodeo at Denver, Colo., about January 10. This show usually lasts about ten days and the next stop for the rodeo hands is Houston, Texas, but next year Fort Worth, Texas, will advance its rodeo dates to January 30th-February 8th, and Houston's rodeo will be January 31st-February 15th.

The Title Race

In the season's title race in the International Rodeo Association point award system Gene Rambo is leading the field again for the All Around title. Gene is the defending champion, having won the title last year. Bud Linderman is a close second, Carl Mendes is third, Wag Blessing is in fourth place and Buster Ivory is fifth.

In saddle bronc riding, Jerry Ambler is again leading the field, Buster Ivory is

(Continued on page 8)

To those who think LEARNING MUSIC is hard . . .

SEE HOW EASY IT IS!

MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE, SWEET LAND OF LIBERTY

Strike these notes and you're playing "America." TRY IT—IT'S FUN

Enrolling for 3rd Course

"I learned more from your course than many of my friends who studied under private teachers have for years. The fact that I've already taken 2 courses and am now enrolling for a third should speak for itself."
F. A. S., Indiana

Plays from Start

"Your advertisements are true to the letter. I can actually play my favorite instrument even though I'm only at the beginning. How can I ever express my joyful gratitude."
F. R. O., Illinois

**Actual names on request. Pictures by Professional Models.*

Easy as A·B·C this print and picture way

• Perhaps you think learning music is a tedious grind. It isn't any longer! Long hours of practicing humdrum scales and hard-work exercises are over and done with.

You have no excuses . . . no alibis whatsoever for not getting started toward musical good times *now!* For, through a new, easy, pleasant method, you can now learn to play right at home—without a private teacher—for only a few cents a day.

Learn to Play by Playing

The lessons come to you by mail from the famous U. S. School of Music . . . complete instructions, large, clear diagrams and all the music you need. You study with a smile. You learn to play by playing real tunes by note. And it's all so easy to understand. First you are *told* how to do a thing. Then a picture *shows* you how. Then *you* do it yourself and *hear* it.

If you're tired of just looking on at parties — if you've envied those who could entertain others — if learning music has always been a never-to-come-true dream—let this time-tested home-study method come to your rescue.

Over 850,000 people have studied music this modern, easy as ABC way. And remember, no matter what instrument you choose, the cost will average only a few cents a day.

Our illustrated Free Booklet fully explains this remarkable course. It shows how you can learn to play quickly, and for a mere fraction of the cost of old, slow methods. So mail the coupon today. The Free Booklet will be sent to you at once together with a "Print and Picture" Sample. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) U. S. School of Music, 2942 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y. (50th Successful Year)

FREE PRINT AND PICTURE SAMPLE

U. S. School of Music, 2942 Brunswick Bldg., N. Y. 10, N. Y.

Please send me Free Booklet and Print and Picture Sample. I would like to play instrument checked below.

(Do you have instrument .....)

Piano	Accordion	Trumpet	Ukulele
Violin	Mandolin	Trombone	Clarinet
Guitar	Saxophone	Tenor Banjo	Other Instrument

Name .....
(PLEASE PRINT)

Street .....

City ..... State .....

Note! If you are under 16 yrs. of age parent must sign coupon

Save 2c—Stick Coupon on penny postcard

The Steady Pay Profession
Good Times or Bad!

SCIENTIFIC CRIME DETECTION

It Is Easy to Learn!

I will teach you this fascinating science during your *spare time at home.* It pays to be an expert in Finger Printing, Firearms Identification, Police Photography and Criminal Investigation. I have trained hundreds of men and women now successfully serving in identification bureaus throughout America. You, too, may quickly prepare yourself to become a well-paid valued officer of the law, often sharing in the generous rewards offered for wanted criminals.

FREE! "BLUE BOOK OF CRIME"

This book is full of exciting information on scientific crime detection. It will show how *You* can get started in a grand career. *Now,* at amazingly low cost. Clip coupon Now... Mail it today.

OVER 800 of all Identification Bureaus in the U. S. employ students and graduates of I. A. S. A majority of these men are heads of Bureaus. Many of them knew nothing about crime detection before training with me. Now they have steady jobs, good salaries and a fine future. Write today for full particulars and free book. Give age.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 7962 Chicago 40, Ill.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 7962, Chicago 40
Gentlemen: Without any obligation on my part, send me the "Blue Book of Crime," and complete list of Identification Bureaus employing your students or graduates, together with your low prices and Easy Terms Offer. (Literature will be sent ONLY to persons stating their age.)

Name..... Age.....

Address.....

RFD or Zone..... State.....

INVENTORS

Learn how to protect your invention. Secure "Patent Guide" together with "Record of Invention" form—without obligation.
CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN & HARVEY JACOBSON
Registered Patent Attorneys
38-A District National Bldg. Washington 5, D. C.

High School Course at Home **Many Finish in 2 Years**

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-258, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

STERLING SILVER

SADDLE RING
Authentic Western Design

Authentic miniature reproduction of romantic western saddle. Handsomely formed from solid Sterling Silver by expert silver craftsmen. Massive style for men! Dainty style for women and children!

SENT ON APPROVAL! clip this ad and mail with your name, address, ring size and style.

SEND NO MONEY! When ring arrives, pay $4.95 plus a few cents postage or send cash, check, or money order, and we pay postage. Wear this sensational ring for 5 days. If not delighted, return for full refund.

WESTERN CRAFTSMEN
Dept. 6081, 1904 FARNAM ST., OMAHA 2, NEB.

THE CHUCK WAGON

(Continued from page 6)

second, Bud Linderman is third, Jim Like is fourth and Casey Tibbs is fifth. Barney Willis is the leader in steer wrestling, Stanley Gomez is second, Gene Rambo is third, Bud Linderman fourth and Dave Campbell fifth.

Glenn Tyler is out in front in the bull riding, Orie Dooley is in second place, Wag Blessing is third, Carl Mendes fourth and Frank Mendes fifth. Carl Mendes is leading the bareback bronc riding field, Jimmy Schumacher is second, Wag Blessing is third, Bud Linderman is fourth and Wallace Brooks is fifth.

Clay Carr is the leader in calf roping, Pat Parker is in second place, Buck Sorrells is third, Choate Webster is fourth and Vern Castro is fifth. Pat Parker leads in wild cow milking, Gene Rambo is second, DeMase Bergevin is third, Vern Castro is fourth and Chuck Sheppard is fifth. Vern Castro is top man in single roping, Glenn Shaw is second, Hugh Clingman is third, Les Hirdes fourth and Jim Laycock is fifth.

A Great Show in Canada

The Calgary, Canada, Stampede this summer was a great show as usual, and while the attendance fell a little short of last year it was still big, running well over three hundred thousand at the main gate of the exhibition.

There are more judges at the Calgary Stampede than at any other in the country, as they have a lot of track events and have different judges for each department. The judges this year were Frank Sharp, Jack Wade, Angus Robertson, Bob Carey, J. Fisher and Dave Abrahams. The timers were Archie Boyce, Dean Griffing and Arnold Montgomery. The arena director was D. Cosgrove, the announcer Warren Cooper. The attendance was listed at 334,464.

The final results in saddle bronc riding were —First, Jim Like; Second, Casey Tibbs; Third, Johnny Tubbs; Fourth, Bill Linderman.

In bull riding Ralph Thomson was the winner, with Jack Cook, Muff Doan and Gerald Roberts splitting second, third and fourth prizes. Jimmy Schumacher copped

(Continued on page 10)

SOME OF THE NATION'S

BIGGEST MEN WERE IN YOUR

ONCE!

MANY of America's production and research leaders have stood just where *YOU* stand today.

They knew—as *YOU* know—that *training* is required for success. They acted upon that knowledge by obtaining their training from I. C. S.

I. C. S. files bulge with the names of former students who are presidents, chief engineers or chief chemists of some of the largest steel, airplane, chemical, railroad and electrical equipment companies in the country.

Primarily, their qualities of ambition and intelligence were responsible for their successes. I. C. S. made its contribution, however, in supplying essential training. It can do the same for *YOU!*

I. C. S. does not pretend that it can make an intelligent, ambitious man of one who is neither. It can and does make *trained* men of those who are intelligent and persevering. Here's the coupon that thousands of successful Americans have mailed!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

ICS

BOX 3970-K, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the course BEFORE which I have marked X:

Business and Academic Courses
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Arithmetic
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business Administration
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Certified Public Accounting
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Commercial Art
- ☐ Cost Accounting
- ☐ Federal Tax
- ☐ First Year College
- ☐ Foremanship
- ☐ French
- ☐ Good English
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Higher Mathematics
- ☐ Motor Traffic
- ☐ Postal Service
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Secretarial
- ☐ Sign Lettering
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Stenography
- ☐ Traffic Management

Air Conditioning and Plumbing Courses
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Heating
- ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Refrigeration
- ☐ Steam Fitting

Chemistry Courses
- ☐ Chemical Engineering
- ☐ Chemistry, Analytical
- ☐ Chemistry, Industrial
- ☐ Chemistry, Mfg. Iron & Steel
- ☐ Petroleum Refining
- ☐ Plastics
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making

Civil Engineering, Architectural and Mining Courses
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Building Estimating
- ☐ Civil Engineering
- ☐ Coal Mining
- ☐ Contracting and Building
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ Lumber Dealer
- ☐ Reading Structural Blueprints
- ☐ Sanitary Engineering
- ☐ Structural Drafting
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping

Communications Courses
- ☐ Electronics
- ☐ Practical Telephony
- ☐ Radio, General
- ☐ Radio Operating
- ☐ Radio Servicing
- ☐ Telegraph Engineering

Electrical Courses
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electric Light and Power
- ☐ Lighting Technician
- ☐ Practical Electrician
- ☐ Power House Electric
- ☐ Ship Electrician

Internal Combustion Engines Courses
- ☐ Auto Technician
- ☐ Aviation
- ☐ Diesel-Electric
- ☐ Diesel Engines
- ☐ Gas Engines

Mechanical Courses
- ☐ Aeronautical Engineer's, Jr.
- ☐ Aircraft Drafting
- ☐ Flight Engineer
- ☐ Forging
- ☐ Foundry Work
- ☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
- ☐ Industrial Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Metallurgy
- ☐ Machine Shop
- ☐ Machine Shop Inspection
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Mold-Loft Work
- ☐ Patternmaking—Wood, Metal
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Drafting
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Worker
- ☐ Ship Drafting
- ☐ Ship Fitting
- ☐ Tool Designing
- ☐ Toolmaking
- ☐ Welding—Gas and Electric

Railroad Courses
- ☐ Air Brake
- ☐ Car Inspector
- ☐ Diesel Locomotive
- ☐ Locomotive Engineer
- ☐ Locomotive Fireman
- ☐ Railroad Section Foreman

Steam Engineering Courses
- ☐ Boilermaking
- ☐ Combustion Engineering
- ☐ Engine Running
- ☐ Marine Engineering
- ☐ Steam Electric
- ☐ Steam Engines

Textile Courses
- ☐ Cotton Manufacturing
- ☐ Rayon Weaving
- ☐ Textile Designing
- ☐ Woolen Manufacturing

Name_____ Home Address_____

City_____ State_____

Age_____ Present Position_____ Working Hours_____ A.M. to_____ P.M.

Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces. Special discount to World War II Veterans.
Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

Send for FREE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE, "Indian News"
• • • DEALER INQUIRIES INVITED • • •
Dept. 8G, Indian Motocycle Co., Springfield 9, Mass.

FOR SUCCESS IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Our files hold hundreds of letters from N.Y.I. Home Study graduates who are now successful professional photographers. These ambitious men and women studied at home in their spare time while they held other jobs. No expensive equipment is necessary. Our pay-as-you-go plan is easy on your budget. You can earn while you learn. Write today for our FREE colorful booklet.

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Dept. 6 10 West 33 Street New York 1, N. Y.

Write Stories that SELL

Mrs. Grace Blanchard had an IDEA for a story. We criticised her story, gave it a new title and told her WHERE TO SEND IT. She got a substantial check THE FIRST TIME OUT. That is a THRILL many of our graduates have each month. Let 30 years of experience guide YOU. Endorsed by Jack London.

FREE BOOKLET "THE ART OF STORY WRITING" with explanation of our personal criticism and manuscript sales service. No obligation. Write!

Hoosier Institute, Dept. 133, 120 S. LaSalle St., Chicago 3, Ill.

DETECTIVES

Home Study in Detective Training—Professionally Modernized—Recognized Instructors—Easy Payments—Write:
INTERNATIONAL DETECTIVE TRAINING SCHOOL
1701-T Monroe St., N. E. Washington 18, D. C.

This Easy Way TEACHES GUITAR AT HOME IN ONLY 30 Days Or Money Back

Astounding new Jim Major Home Method teaches you to play guitar easily, quickly, without long hours practicing scales or exercises. *No musical knowledge necessary.* Play many popular songs, hymns in very short time. Limited time offer: 30 lessons, complete course for only $1.69. Send no money . . . pay postman $1.69 plus postage. (Cash with order we pay postage.) Money back guarantee. Send today to Jim Major, Room 15-B, 230 East Ohio, Chicago 11, Ill.

THE CHUCK WAGON

(Continued from page 8)

the bareback bronc riding, Wag Blessing was second, George Spence was third and Gerald Roberts fourth.

George Leask was best man in the calf roping, Pat Burton was second, Burt Cochlan was third and George Pambrun was fourth.

Steer Decorating

Scotty Bagnell won the steer decorating, Red McDonald was second, Bill Linderman was third and Jim Robinson was fourth.

Steer decorating is the Canadian style of bulldogging, or rather takes the place of bulldogging or steer wrestling as performed in the arenas of the United States. In steer decorating the contestant rides his cowpony to the side of the running steer, leaps from the saddle and grasps the steer by the horns, but instead of twisting the animal's neck and forcing it to the ground, he simply slips a little rubber band over the horn. To this rubber band is tied a little strip of colored ribbon.

The time is usually shorter than in the regular style of steer wrestling, as it is much easier and quicker to slip a ribboned rubber band upon the horn than to twist the animal down. The colored ribbon is the reason why the stunt is called decorating.

The Plainview Show

Out at Plainview, Texas, they had a dandy rodeo this summer, with T. C. Buck and Tommy Steiner furnishing the stock and acting as producers, sponsored by the Plainview Rodeo Association. Jack Favors was managing director, Don Kayne, announcer, Mary Lou Moore secretary. Judges were Buck Jones and Bill Best. Timers were Mary Lou Moore and Ruth Kayne, and the clowns were Buck Robinson and Jack Asbury.

The final results in saddle bronc riding were—First, Johnny Bell; Second, Jack Wilkinson; Third, Tek Lewis; Fourth, Boots Hawthorne.

Bud Humphrey won the bull riding, W. N. Rice was second, Speck Tipton was third and Tek Lewis was fourth. Bud Humphrey was best man in the bareback bronc riding, Tek

(Continued on page 104)

What Strange Powers Did The Ancients Possess?

EVERY important discovery relating to mind power, sound thinking and cause and effect, as applied to self-advancement, was known centuries ago, before the masses could read and write.

Much has been written about the wise men of old. A popular fallacy has it that their secrets of personal power and successful living were lost to the world. Knowledge of nature's laws, accumulated through the ages, is never lost. At times the great truths possessed by the sages were hidden from unscrupulous men in high places, but never destroyed.

Why Were Their Secrets Closely Guarded?

Only recently, as time is measured; not more than twenty generations ago, less than 1/100th of 1% of the earth's people were thought capable of receiving basic knowledge about the laws of life, for it is an elementary truism that knowledge is power and that power cannot be entrusted to the ignorant and the unworthy. Wisdom is not readily attainable by the general public; nor recognized when right within reach. The average person absorbs a multitude of details about things, but goes through life without ever knowing where and how to acquire mastery of the fundamentals of the inner mind—that mysterious silent something which "whispers" to you from within.

Fundamental Laws of Nature

Your habits, accomplishments and weaknesses are the effects of causes. Your thoughts and actions are governed by fundamental laws. Example: The law of compensation is as fundamental as the laws of breathing, eating and sleeping. All fixed laws of nature are as fascinating to study as they are vital to understand for success in life.

You can learn to find and follow every basic law of life. You can begin at any time to discover a whole new world of interesting truths. You can start at once to awaken your inner powers of self-understanding and self-advancement. You can learn from one of the world's oldest institutions, first known in America in 1694. Enjoying the high regard of hundreds of leaders, thinkers and teachers, the order is known as the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Its complete name is the "Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis," abbreviated by the initials "AMORC." The teachings of the Order are not sold, for it is not a commercial organization, nor is it a religious sect. It is a nonprofit fraternity, a brotherhood in the true sense.

Not For General Distribution

Sincere men and women, in search of the truth —those who wish to fit in with the ways of the world—are invited to write for a complimentary copy of the sealed booklet, "The Mastery of Life." It tells how to contact the librarian of the archives of AMORC for this rare knowledge. This booklet is not intended for general distribution; nor is it sent without request. It is therefore suggested that you write for your copy to Scribe J. M. B.

The ROSICRUCIANS
[AMORC]
San Jose California

TOM STOPPED THE RUNAWAY AND THEN . . .

WATCHED BY HER DAD AND A PASSERBY, "BABS" WEBB IS GIVING HER FAVORITE TROTTER HIS MORNING WORKOUT WHEN . . .

STEADY, JEB!

JUMP, BABS!

THE FEAR-CRAZED ANIMAL SNAPS A REIN AND GALLOPS BLINDLY AT THE FENCE

WHOA, BOY! IT'S ALL OVER

WHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, BABS?

YES, THANKS TO MISTER . . .

TOM ADAM'S MY NAME. JUST DRIVING THROUGH

LUNCH? YOU'RE VERY KIND, BUT I'M HARDLY PRESENTABLE. BEEN DRIVING SINCE MIDNIGHT AND . . .

YOU CAN CLEAN UP AT THE CLUB. COME ON

AND HERE'S MY RAZOR

THIS BLADE'S A SWEETHEART! MY FACE FEELS GREAT!

TOUGH WHISKERS ARE NO PROBLEM FOR THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN

I WISH YOU COULD SEE ME DRIVE IN THE CLUB HANDICAP THIS SATURDAY

HE'S CERTAINLY HANDSOME

SATURDAY? TRY AND KEEP ME AWAY!

YOU'LL FIND SHAVING IS QUICKER, EASIER AND MORE REFRESHING WITH THIN GILLETTES. NO OTHER LOW-PRICED BLADE IS SO KEEN AND SO LONG LASTING. AND, FURTHERMORE, THIN GILLETTES PROTECT YOU FROM THE IRRITATION AND DISCOMFORT CAUSED BY MISFIT BLADES BECAUSE EVERY THIN GILLETTE IS MADE TO FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY. TO GET REAL SHAVING SATISFACTION . . . USE THIN GILLETTES

THIN Gillette BLADES

4 for 10¢

GUNS OF ARIZONA

CHARLES N. HECKELMANN

While fighting side by side against raiding Apaches, Lieutenants Bob Dallas and Frank Holland engage in a bitter personal feud that presages grim tragedy!

CHAPTER I

The Rivals

FIVE miles from Camp Breadon in Southern Arizona a detachment of weary, blue-clad cavalrymen moved at a slow trot through the warm, windless night. Dust boiled up in whirling clouds beneath the pounding hoofs of the horses. It settled in thin layers upon the troopers' faded gray shirts, their yellow-striped cavalry pants. And it drifted into the sweat tracks that furrowed their sun-bronzed cheeks.

This was a mixed detail of twenty men from Troops D and F of the 4th Cavalry, Army of the Southwest Territory, return-

ing from a three-day scout patrol. They had ridden one hundred and fifty miles through the rugged, sun-drenched wastes of the Pinal and Maricopa Mountains, futilely seeking to cut the trail of the Tonto chief, Naquino, and his band of Tonto and Chiricahua renegade Apaches.

For more than three months Naquino had blazed a fiery path of terror and destruction across central and southern Arizona. Early in March, the Tontos had swooped down on a lonely stage station high up in Chevelon Pass, burned it to the ground, massacred the three white men there and run off the stage horses.

They had moved south after that, cutting along Cherry Creek and Cottonwood Creek and wiping out several small cattle outfits. In the middle of April they had trapped one of Roy Broderick's freight caravans in the Tonto Basin and destroyed it, leaving the freighters unfortunate enough to escape Tonto arrows or bullets, tied upside down to their wagon wheels over hot fires.

In May, Naquino's renegades had surprised Camp Verde, at a time when the camp was left with only a skeleton force of cavalry during an exchange of troops, and run off fifty head of horses. Now, they were somewhere in the Pinals or Maricopas, striking at isolated cow outfits, trapping and destroying emigrant wagon trains or lonely prospectors after the yellow lure of gold.

Troops from Camp Breadon had run into parts of Naquino's band in the Pinals. There had been a brief running skirmish with the Indians ducking swiftly away and avoiding a pitched battle. The casualties: Four troopers killed and six wounded; two Tontos killed.

Each encounter served to strengthen the conviction that in the Apache the troops were meeting the fiercest and shrewdest fighters in the world. The Indians knew the territory. When they fought they were like flitting shadows in the brush, firing their guns or twanging their bows, then seeming to melt into the earth, only to reappear behind a bush or tree, yards away.

BUT the troopers traversing the last weary miles to the Santa Cruz River and Camp Breadon at this dead, quiet hour of midnight had not even the satisfaction of a skirmish with the Apaches to look back upon. They had cut no fresh sign of Naquino's band and three days in the saddle had left them gaunt and pinched.

Riding at the head of the column, dark-haired Lieutenant Bob Dallas glanced up from the narrow trail and the twisted shapes of rocks, catclaw and cactus, and turned toward the thick-shouldered officer beside him.

"Frank," he said, "do you reckon we'll ever catch up with Naquino?"

Lieutenant Frank Holland regarded his fellow officer with a taciturn expression. When he spoke his voice had a curiously flat quality.

"They've got to stop running sometime."

"When Roy Broderick and some of those ranchers like Corbett and Miley hear that we still haven't captured Naquino they'll sure raise hob."

"Do you blame them?" Holland's scowl gave his triangular face that tapered down to a narrow, jutting jaw an almost sinister cast. His green eyes at this moment were unfriendly. "The Army is hardly giving the whites in the Territory the protection they're entitled to expect. It's people like you, wanting to give the Apaches land, set them up on reservations, supply them with food and guns so they can use those guns on white settlers, that have helped make Indians like Naquino, Geronimo, Nana and Victorio powerful."

Dallas' strong, angular face hardened and his big-knuckled hands tightened on the reins.

"That's a lie, Frank," he snapped. "And you know it."

There it was again—the old enmity which had set them so grimly apart at West Point.

Both brilliant and ambitious, they had sensed at their very first meeting that they were destined to be rivals for honor and distinction at the Government's military college on the Hudson. Dallas had welcomed the challenge, but Holland, tormented by an inordinate pride that could not tolerate defeat, and whip-sawed by an unaccountable inferiority, and hypersensitive to praise or blame, had always resented Dallas.

The antagonism between them had grown until the final crushing blow to

Dallas pumped two shots into the big Tonto, just as Waquino thrust home his lance (CHAP. XX)

Holland's pride when Dallas had emerged as top man of the Class of '70. Events of the year that followed had only served to accentuate his bitterness. Hoping to be commissioned to a post in Washington, where Army life was easy and the chance for rapid promotion rumored to be a mere matter of playing the proper politics, Holland had received an unexpected jolt when shipped to Fort Bayard in Southern New Mexico. Dallas remained in Washington for a full year.

Holland had been transferred from Bayard to Fort Stanton and then to Fort Apache—but always with the Army of the Southwest, men who burned and blistered in the blazing sun while they fought the endless war with the Apaches. Here was no glamour, no glory, no chance to gain the coveted post of captain. And Holland found no satisfaction in learning that Dallas, chafing at the dullness of Army life in Washington, had requested a transfer to the Southwest.

Eventually, Holland had been shifted to Camp Breadon to take over Troop F of the 4th Cavalry. When Captain Ed Slater of Troop D was killed Dallas had been brought in from Fort Grant to take over Troop D.

All of these memories were vividly in Dallas' mind in the brief interval before Holland straightened in his saddle and lashed out his answer.

"Dallas, there are two things I know. One is that the only good Indian is a dead one." His mouth grew taut. "The other is that while I'm in command of this detail I won't take that kind of talk from you."

For a moment their eyes met until the night was like a hot, smothering blanket, folding in their rage.

Dallas was conscious of the quiet attentiveness of the troopers behind them. Off to one side Sergeant Guy Modoc was covertly watching them. And then, with Holland stonily waiting for Dallas' apology, the night sprang alive to the distant rattle of gunfire.

"What do you call that?" Trooper Jim Suder yelled, his hand thrusting the guidon upward so that the red-and-yellow pennon with the big D in the lower right-hand corner, rippled.

Guy Modoc reined his horse over to Dallas.

"Sounds like trouble at Notah's camp." Sporadic shooting could still be heard.

Holland lifted his arm and yelled: "Forward! At a gallop!"

The column stretched out, moving fast, as a shrill trumpet blast sent ringing echoes through the surrounding hills.

HOLLAND twisted in his saddle, looking back. But it was Dallas who snapped the curt command at Trumpeter Harry Ronald.

"Put that bugle away! Whatever's happening at Notah's camp, we'll have a better chance of helping if we come in quietly."

"Sorry, sir. I—I didn't think. I—"

"Too late now," snapped Holland. There was anger in his tone, but not for Ronald. His green eyes fastened upon Dallas. "You forget yourself. I'm giving the orders."

Dallas nodded, lifted his hand in a salute.

For a mile the horses went along at a good pace, then the punishing strain of three days' hard riding took its inevitable toll and their speed slackened. Now and then a trooper's mount faltered or stumbled in mid-stride.

The sound of gunfire had quit now, and it seemed to Dallas, scanning the sage and cactus-dotted flats, that he saw the dim shapes of mounted men hurrying toward the hills.

Troopers freed their carbines from saddle scabbards and slid their revolvers up and down in their holsters.

Campfires began blazing up in the camp, throwing long, yellow gashes of light into the sky. Indian men and women and children drifted in and out of the firelight as the camp dogs set up their shrill barking and followed the soldiers to the smashed remains of Chief Notah's wickiup.

"Scatter and see what you can find!" Holland ordered the troops.

The detail split up, riders swinging to circle the camp. Holland and Dallas drew to a halt in front of a somber, stocky Indian. He had a broad, heavy-boned face, muddy brown eyes and a hawk nose. He wore an old pair of Army pants cut halfway up the thighs, a faded blue shirt, the tail hanging out, and a red cloth band held his dark, oily hair

in place.

Despite his ludicrous appearance, this fifty-year-old Apache nevertheless carried himself with a dignity that had always impressed Dallas. Now, as he and Holland dismounted and signaled for Jim Bell, the civilian scout and interpreter, to approach, he saw how steadily Notah watched him.

He saw, too, that other wickiups in the camp had been knocked down. And off to his right where the Indians were growing some vegetables, a big patch of young corn had been ruthlessly trampled.

Although Holland was in command and Notah obviously was aware of the fact, the aged Apache turned his attention to Dallas.

"Ask him what happened," Dallas instructed Bell.

CHAPTER II

Renegade Raid

BELL moved forward, talking rapidly in the Apache tongue. The scout was a rough, unshaven man in his middle forties, a little stooped, but his gray eyes beneath thick brows were keen and piercing. He moved with an almost feline grace and stealth. His skin was dark enough, his cheekbones high and prominent enough for him to be mistaken for an Indian.

After a moment Notah began talking. Bell translated briefly.

"He says the camp was asleep when a band of Indians attacked them. Several wickiups were destroyed, and a big field of corn. Ronald's trumpet blast scared the renegades off before they could do more damage."

"Anyone hurt?" Dallas asked.

Bell turned to Notah and spoke a few words. Sad, sonorous words fell from the Indian's lips.

"Yes," Bell said. "Two of the older subchiefs and one squaw were killed."

"Tell him the Army is sorry," said Dallas. "We tried to get here in time to help. We, too, mourn his dead."

"Stop it," Holland interrupted curtly. "Three Indians dead. That's three less to make trouble."

Dallas' temper flared. He had a wiry, compact build and now the muscles of his chest and arms strained against his sweat-smeared shirt.

"Three Indians," he said levelly. "They belonged to Notah's Aravaipa tribe and they were our friends."

Holland's grimace left his lips when he saw Notah's dark, fathomless eyes upon him. There was something disconcerting in the calm, cold scrutiny of those Apache eyes.

Dallas stepped forward, his whole body tense. He looked at Notah and said one word.

"Naquino?"

The Indian shook his head, then spoke to Jim Bell.

"The Tontos are in the Maricopas, he says," the scout translated. "The men who attacked his camp might have been white men."

"Tell him to make up his mind," Holland growled. "A little while ago he said they were Indians."

Again Bell exchanged a few words in Apache with Notah. "They were dressed as Indians," Bell told the angry lieutenant. "But some of them were tall and big —like white men."

"What did you expect?" Holland said to Dallas impatiently. "Notah is an Apache. Do you think he's going to talk against his kind? He's probably working hand in hand with Naquino and his Tonto outlaws."

A sharp retort came to Dallas' lips, but he stifled it.

"There are plenty of renegade whites in Tucson who don't like having these Aravaipas living so close to Tucson and Camp Breadon."

"I don't like it myself," said Holland.

The troopers were riding back now, having completed their circuit of the camp. Sergeant Modoc halted beside Holland and saluted.

"No sign of the raiders, sir. I understand the squaw who was killed was one of Notah's wives."

Holland accepted the news calmly. But Dallas felt a pang of sympathy for this

dark, weatherbeaten Indian who stood so stoically before them while grief gnawed at his heart.

For almost a year Notah had kept the three hundred Aravaipas in his camp living at peace with the whites in southern Arizona. While Victorio and his Mescaleros were harassing Major Morrow and his 9th Cavalry in New Mexico, and units of the 4th Cavalry hunted Naquino and his Tontos through Arizona, Notah's tribesmen had been eking out a meager but peaceful existence on their small farming and grazing tracts.

Some of the younger Aravaipa braves, led by an ill-tempered warrior named Shonten, had evinced a desire to cut loose and flee to the hills. But Notah, still the real power among the Aravaipas, had kept them in line. Dallas had reached the conclusion that, given a square deal and considerate treatment, even the fiercest Apache tribes could live at peace with their white brothers.

AND so he was sorry for the tragedy that had descended upon Notah, and anxious to help in any way he could. He looked around the camp, noting the huddle of wizened old warriors, a group of dark-eyed squaws, and a few young Indian boys clinging to their mothers' skirts.

"Tell Notah," Dallas said to Bell, "that we saw his attackers ride off toward the hills and that we want to follow them but our horses are used up from three days' riding. Tell him that we see only old men, women and children, and we are wondering where his young braves are."

The Aravaipa chief listened to the scout.

"Shonten and all his young warriors are off on a hunt for game," Bell translated his answer.

"What kind of game?" Holland cut in drily. "White men?"

The scout, who was not subject to Army regulations, did not hide his displeasure.

"That's a fool thing to say," he muttered. "I'd trust Notah and his Aravaipas farther than I would a lot of whites I know."

Holland flushed and a dangerous, hot glint warmed his eyes.

"You wouldn't be meaning anything personal by that, would you, Jim?" he inquired sharply.

"Climb down off your high horse, Lieutenant," Bell advised. "I'm just stating facts."

Holland considered the civilian scout with a savage attention. He appeared ready to carry the argument further, but the scout turned away to watch Bob Dallas who had moved off to the edge of the Indian camp.

Dallas was hunkered down, staring at a patch of ground in the sputtering flame of a match, cupped in his hands. He called the scout over.

"Jim, have a look at this."

The scout walked over. The cavalry lieutenant struck another match, tilted the flame toward the ground and pointed to the welter of hoofprints.

"Looks like Notah's hunch about white renegades was right. Those raiders were riding horses with shod hoofs—and Indians don't usually shoe their mounts."

"Maybe," Bell said. "Maybe not. Most of the Indians in the Territory are riding stolen Army mounts." He stared at several narrower and deeper indentations in the dirt. "And if you're telling me those prints are from the heels of a pair of cowboy boots, I'd say you're right—but Apaches'll wear anything they can lay their hands on."

Dallas rose and tilted his forage cap, with the crossed swords fastened to the front, far back on his curly brown hair.

"They could still be range drifters from Tucson," he insisted. "Or maybe some of those tough gun-hands Corbett and Miley hire to punch their cows."

He hesitated briefly as Holland slouched up, his eyes sardonic. Dallas met his glance evenly, then dug a piece of blue silk fabric from his pocket.

"Anyway, I'll hold onto this." It was part of the sleeve of a man's shirt, evidently ripped off in a scuffle. "Found it in a bush yonder. Seems to me I remember one of the punchers at one of the cattle spreads—or maybe it was some hombre in Tucson—wearing nothing but fancy silk shirts. Maybe I can match this piece up sometime."

Holland's eyes, alert with interest, gradually turned dark with impatience.

"This is getting us nowhere," he said curtly. "We'll ride on."

At his signal, Sergeant Modoc bawled

an order and the detail fell in, ready to continue the interrupted march to Camp Breadon.

The strident call of the sentry at Post Number Ten met the troopers as they splashed across a gravelly ford of the Santa Cruz River and urged their weary horses up the sloping bank.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

Holland, leading the column, drew to a halt.

"Lieutenant Holland and scout detail."

The sentry immediately shouted for the corporal of the guard at Post Number Seven. Corporal Zoe Bailey appeared. Then, the formality of recognition done with, the column of cavalry was permitted to pass throught the sentry lines.

AN IMMEDIATE stir hit the hitherto sleeping Army post. A lamp bloomed into life in the Headquarters 'dobe along the north side of the parade. Other lights appeared along Officers' Row. A few half-dressed troopers rambled out of the one-story barracks building to watch the detail move past the post bakery, the breaking corral, the blacksmith shop, and line up stiffly at attention.

Holland and Dallas sat their mounts in front of the detail. Holland let his slow, penetrating gaze linger on each weary man, then curtly dismissed the formation.

He and Dallas dismounted. A trooper led their horses away. Then Holland turned toward headquarters. Colonel Raven stood in the shadows of the ramada, his blue trousers and tunic hastily thrown over his nightshirt. As Holland crossed the parade toward the commandant and Dallas made as if to wander on to his own quarters on Officers' Row, Raven's deep, resonant tones reached him.

"I'll want to see you, too, Mr. Dallas."

Dallas swung about, his saber striking against his right leg, as the colonel spoke to Holland.

"Any luck, Mr. Holland?"

"No, sir. We did not cut any sign of Naquino."

Raven was a short, barrel-chested man in his late fifties. He had the faded blue eyes and weather-wrinkled skin of an old campaigner. He leaned on a cane and, now and then, when he moved his right leg quickly, a grimace of pain traveled across his face.

The trooper on the ambulance lashed his mules into a dead run as horses spilled out of the chaparral (CHAP. VIII)

It never failed to annoy him—the slow healing of that rifle wound received in a fight with Naquino's renegade Apaches in the Maricopas. There was a tremendous amount of energy stored up in his body and he could find no suitable outlet for it now that he was prevented from taking his turn at active duty. He puffed out his ruddy cheeks, blew a gusty breath, and said, out of his deep understanding of men:

"There's something else, Mr. Holland. Out with it."

Holland, whose attention had wandered past the colonel to the half-open screen door of the 'dobe, pulled his eyes back to Raven and quickly gave an account of the happenings at the Aravaipa encampment. Raven's dark brows drew together.

"That certainly doesn't help," he said. "Are you sure Naquino didn't ride around you while you were in the Pinals, Mr. Holland?"

Holland's hands knotted at his sides, the only betraying sign of his affronted pride.

"Positive, sir," he replied.

Boots scuffed along the dry earth of the parade and Jim Bell strolled up to Headquarters.

"What do you think, Jim?" Raven asked.

The scout shifted a wad of chewing tobacco from one cheek to the other, before deigning to speak.

"Might have been Naquino," he said tonelessly. "He's a smooth one—like all Apaches." He jerked his head toward Dallas. "Bob here found prints of shod horses and a piece of silk shirt."

"Ah, white men!" Raven exclaimed.

Bell shrugged. "You tell me, Colonel, whose horses the Apaches have been riding the past few years."

Raven's cane punched a round hole in the dust at his feet. He looked angry, but gradually managed a half-hearted grin. It was one of the crosses that the Army of the Southwest had to bear—the general knowledge that the Apaches, for the most part, rode stolen Army mounts.

Someone laughed softly in the shadows at the far edge of the ramada. The colonel shot a razor-keen glance in the direction of the sound. His face, reddening with rage, became composed when two men sauntered into view.

"Broderick, I thought you were sleeping," Raven said, with just a hint of irritation in his voice.

CHAPTER III

The Colonel's Daughter

ROY BRODERICK, owner of a profitable freighting business that had his wagons supplying all the Army forts and ranchers in central and southern Arizona, sauntered toward Raven, hearty, assured and affable. A man with power and influence in the Territory, Broderick was completely at ease with the commandant.

Despite the late hour he was fully dressed. His white shirt was crisp and clean, his black pants immaculate, his boots freshly shined. He was a big man, smooth when he wanted to be, but behind the smoothness was a hard-grained toughness.

"A man who sleeps too much on the frontier," he said slowly, "usually wakes up dead with an Apache lance sticking in his ribs. Me and Shorty Russell were just killing time with some two-card stud when we heard the detail ride up."

The silent, thin, wiry man beside Broderick wore rough range clothes. He was clean-shaven and had deep-set black eyes in a dead-white bony face. He had noticeably small ears and close-cropped dark hair. His slender, long-fingered hands were idly hooked in his shell-studded gunbelt.

"I've been laughing at the Army and at the Broderick Freight Lines," Broderick resumed. "The Apaches ride your horses and they sleep on Broderick blankets and use my guns and food." Suddenly he was not smiling, and a somber note crept in. "Not that it's funny, having my freight shipments raided by Naquino's Tontos."

"Curse it, Broderick," said Raven, "you don't have to rub it in. I'll clean up those Apaches before the summer is out. Just watch." His glance slid over his two waiting lieutenants. "By the way, Broderick, you know Lieutenant Holland and Lieu-

tenant Dallas, don't you?"

"Yes, I've met them," Broderick said. He nodded pleasantly to Holland, but when he looked at Dallas his expression underwent a subtle, unfathomable change.

"Dallas is the watchdog you send to Tucson every once in a while to check my shipments leaving Tucson, Colonel," he said. "The Army doesn't trust anybody." A bantering note took the sting out of his words, but Raven, nevertheless, made instant reply.

"That's just routine, Broderick—though Breadon has been using a heap of equipment lately, more than our quota, according to the Quartermaster General in Washington." The commandant added to Holland and Dallas, "Broderick's taking a good-sized order back to Tucson with him in the morning, so he's got no kick."

Broderick looked around sharply as he suddenly noticed that Holland was staring over Raven's shoulder toward the door of the Headquarters building. A slender girl with a quilted robe covering her filmy nightdress, was momentarily limned in the lamplight inside. Then she stepped into the cool shadows of the ramada.

"Dad, are you going to stand out here talking all night?" she asked, chidingly. Then she saw Holland. "Why, Frank!"

Holland rushed forward and took Blanche Raven in his arms.

"Frank!" she protested. "Not here. In front of everyone!"

She smiled up at him, but she saw immediately that his pride had been affronted, for he dropped his arms and stepped back stiffly.

"It's been a long time," he said, apologetically.

In the faint starlight Blanche Raven's skin held a silvery glow. Her smile was quick and eager. Though her eyes appeared dark now, they were actually a pure deep blue. There was strength in the firm line of her chin and an air of assurance in the way she carried her lithe-limbed body.

"A long time, yes," she repeated, a dancing light in her eyes that brought no softening in the rigid face before her. "Three days."

Blanche's glance, traveling beyond Holland, settled upon Dallas.

"Why, Bob, hello!" she greeted, holding her hands out to him.

It was merely a friendly gesture—the frank way this girl met life. Dallas swept off his forage cap, took her hands and grinned down at her.

"You're better than a cool drink of water," he said while his heart was suddenly pounding like a trip-hammer.

FROM the first day he had ridden into Breadon this bright-eyed girl had affected him deeply. He knew now that he had loved her from that first moment. The knowledge sang in his brain, throbbed in every tired nerve of his body.

"That's a nice thing to say, Bob." Her voice was low and pleasant. "I almost think you mean it."

"I do," he said.

"My hand," she told him, her eyes twinkling.

In sudden confusion he relinquished her soft, slender fingers. Her smile faded slightly under Holland's taciturn glance. And for Dallas, the magic of the moment was swept away by the black malevolence of Holland's eyes. But he still knew that this lovely girl, who had grown up amid the smell of saddle leather and horses, and the clash of guns and sabers, the shrill call of the trumpets at reveille, mess call, guard mount, retreat, tattoo and taps was the girl he loved. And there would never be any other woman in his life.

He had known women, had even imagined himself in love. But no other girl had affected him as Blanche did. He admired her spirit as much as he did the softly smiling curve of her lips. But more than that, was the feeling of peace and contentment, of completion, that she brought.

And so, in those first days at Camp Breadon, he had made his definite play for her attention. If his feelings for her were apparent to the rest of the camp he didn't much care. She had been happy and gay with him. And if at times he had sensed a faint reserve in her manner, she had given him no reason to suppose that she was annoyed by his company.

It was not until a few hours before Frank Holland returned from the Pinals with a scout patrol, that Lieutenant Holly Adkins, the camp's medical officer, told Dallas that Blanche was engaged to Holland. That had hit Dallas like the thrust of an Apache lance. For he had known

then that there had been nothing behind Blanche's smiling lips and laughing eyes for him. She had enjoyed his company and respected him as a friend. That was all.

But for Holland it had been far from all. He had called on Dallas, given him a curt warning to stay away from Blanche.

Dallas, loving the girl, was willing to step aside to leave her to the man of her choice. He had said as much. But Holland, fired with jealousy and resenting Dallas' presence at Breadon, anyway, had been so harsh that they had narrowly escaped coming to blows.

So now, again seeing the dark look in Holland's eyes, Dallas knew that Holland's jealousy, his sensitive pride were making him resent every smile, every friendly gesture Blanche bestowed.

"Colonel," broke in Broderick's smooth, oily voice, "you've got a mighty fine-looking girl for a daughter."

Blanche's long lashes lowered to cover her momentary confusion.

Raven looked pleased. "If I didn't know it, the way Mr. Holland here keeps pressing her to marry him would tell me," he said genially. "She'll surprise you some day, Holland, and set the date. Then she'll run your life like the Army runs mine."

Holland said nothing. But his pride was plain when she lifted herself on tiptoe and kissed his cheek.

"It's back to bed for me, Frank," she said. "And I think Dad and the rest of you could do with some sleep, too."

"She's right," Raven murmured. "That will be all for tonight. In the morning Lieutenant Waters will take a relief detail out to keep looking for Naquino. And you, Mr. Dallas, will take ten men from your troop and pick up whatever additional information you can about those raiders who hit Notah's camp tonight."

Blanche said good night and moved through the screen door. Dallas and Holland saluted and turned away, with Broderick and Russell tagging behind.

DALLAS walked straight to his own 'dobe. The air inside was warm and close. He walked back to the porch, took the olla down from the hook where it always hung and treated himself to the luxury of a long drink.

He marched back to his bed, feeling his way through the darkness. He sat down to remove his boots and socks, climbed out of his trousers, and stretched out on the bed. The springs squeaked under his weight. Warm air spilled through the window. It brushed across him, bringing no relief. Then he was asleep. . . .

How long he had been sleeping he did not know when suddenly he was wide awake, his nerves screaming a silent warning that he was not alone. For seconds that dragged like eternity he lay rigidly quiet. His mouth was dry and a muscle in his neck began to twitch. The darkness was absolute. There was no sound. Yet the feeling persisted that someone was in the room.

His revolver and saber were hanging by the chair, but he realized he could never reach them without giving the intruder warning that he was awake. The stillness settled upon Dallas like a cold, damp fog. A prickly sensation crawled over his skin.

His straining eyes were unable to penetrate the intense blackness. There was something odd about that curtain of gloom. There was no break in it.

Suddenly it came to him. Where the window was, where there should be a faint patch of grayness, there was only blackness. He knew, then, where the intruder was.

He moved swiftly, twisting up and to one side. But the bedsprings shrilled their metallic protest and the darkness came fully alive, flinging its weight upon him. He pitched backward beneath the violent charge of the intruder's diving body. A fist cracked against the side of his jaw, numbing it.

He swung his own arms upward, locked them around his assailant's neck. The two threshed wildly back and forth across the bed. The point of the other man's knee slammed into Dallas, driving the wind out of his lungs.

A short-armed blow struck the side of Dallas' head. He struck out blindly, and felt his knuckles smash into the man's neck below the ear. The hands that held Dallas relaxed. He wrenched away, scrambled toward the side of the bed.

The intruder leaped again, landed on Dallas' back. Dallas ducked his head between the fellow's legs and catapulted the

man over his back. The intruder brought up against the wall with a resounding crash.

Dallas got to his feet, met his assailant as the man was rising. He hooked a left to the fellow's mid-section, then followed in close with a right that skinned the side of the man's jaw. All this while not a word was spoken. The darkness was a smothering veil around them. The only sound was the scuff of their feet, the labored rasp of their breathing.

Dallas shuffled forward, swinging both hands—and hit nothing. He whirled, sensing that his opponent had shifted his position in that almost impenetrable blackness. Suddenly a terrific blow jolted his chest. He staggered backward, fighting to maintain his balance. Then, even as he realized that the other man had butted him, the back of his knees hit the metal side piece of the bed and he fell.

He heard the rush of the man speeding past him. There was a crash of wood, a low oath as the intruder bumped into the low chest that held Dallas' clothes. Then he was running through the front room.

Dallas rolled out of bed, raced after him. He tripped over his saber as he passed the chair and fell flat on his face. The screen at the front door closed with a slight *bang* as Dallas picked himself up, charged around the bed and rushed to the door.

CHAPTER IV

Sardonic Freighter

OUTSIDE the night was hot and still. The whole baked expanse of the parade ground was empty. There was no sound of anyone running.

Bob Dallas started out of the shadows that hugged the ramada, then remembered that he was in his underwear. Whoever the intruder was, he had already ducked into cover. All along Officers' Row the line of 'dobes was in darkness. The camp was asleep. While he debated summoning the corporal of the guard, the sentries began sounding the hour call.

Number One at the guardhouse yelled: "Number One! Three o'clock, and all's well!"

Number Two at the stables passed the call along until finally it reached Number Ten at the river's edge.

Dallas rubbed the bruised knuckles of his right hand, stared down at his bare, awkward-looking legs and decided that he would appear ridiculous reporting that someone had been snooping around in his quarters in the middle of the night.

He tramped back inside the 'dobe, paused in the front room to take a match from a box on the shelf. Then he went on to the bedroom, fumbled around for the lamp and lit it.

The bed was a wreck, the sheet ripped in two places, and the mattress had slid halfway to the floor. He put it back in place. Turning to the chair, he noted that his cavalry trousers were heaped in a crumpled ball, not folded as he had left them. And the long piece of blue silk he had discovered under a bush at the Aravaipa camp was lying on the floor.

Obviously, the intruder had been seeking that piece of evidence and had been interrupted by Dallas' sudden awakening. Because in the confusion of the fight he had sacrificed the blue silk rather than run the risk of discovery.

Perched on the edge of the bed, Dallas considered the significance of this raid upon his quarters. The fact that someone thought that bit of silk incriminating enough to come after it lent definite substance to Notah's suspicion and his own stubborn belief that white men had participated in the attack upon Notah's camp.

He reached the grim and reluctant conclusion that the intruder was someone right in Camp Breadon, for it was no easy matter for anyone—even an Apache—to sneak through the sentry lines. The only ones who knew about that torn silk sleeve were the troopers in the scout detail—and Broderick and his aide.

Broderick and Russell had come up to headquarters uninvited. There was no telling how long they had hung back in the gloom before allowing their presence to become known. They knew about that piece of silk. And they had spent the night on Officers' Row!

It must have been Russell, Dallas told

himself, at the same time that he dismissed a third possibility from his mind. Holland was entirely out of the question. He was an Army man, out of West Point, and he had ambitions. It was foolish to think of Holland being involved. He must not let his dislike for Holland color his judgment.

But if white men had taken part in the raid, what was the reason? To foster ill-feeling between the Aravaipas and the Army? That didn't make sense, for if the Aravaipas joined the Tontos on the war-path there would be the devil to pay in the Territory, and life for the white prospectors, ranchers, settlers—and even the whites in Tucson—would be made even more precarious than it was now. And if it was plunder the renegades were after, they had selected a mighty poor target, for Notah's Indians barely scraped a living out of the soil.

DALLAS finally blew out the lamp and went to bed, unable to reason the problem out. He slept soundly the rest of the night until Trumpeter Harry Ronald's reveille call, echoing through the entire camp, sent him tumbling out of bed.

He climbed into his boots and trousers, then shaved hurriedly. Looking into the cracked mirror above the chest he saw a faint reddish mark along the side of his jaw, the only evidence of his fight with the mysterious intruder.

He wondered if the other man bore any marks from the encounter, and resolved to waste no time in finding out. Finished shaving, he slipped into a fresh gray shirt, drew on his blue tunic and campaign hat, then buckled his saber into place.

Striding out of the 'dobe he saw that the day's routine had begun. The sun was rising like a ball of ruddy flame behind a phalanx of fleecy clouds. Horizontal shafts of light seeped across the parade where Lieutenant Waters sat his big brown gelding and watched the members of the relief detail lined up before him.

Waters lifted a hand to Dallas. Dallas grinned.

His glance slid along Officers' Row until it reached the large squat 'dobe where Colonel Raven had his living quarters and office. Raven was standing under the ramada. Beside him was Blanche, in a cool white frock. She saw Dallas at once and her ready smile curved her lips. He smiled back at her, lifting his campaign hat.

Lieutenant Waters uttered a low command that sent the blue-clad cavalrymen into their saddles. They waited silently, reins held in gauntleted hands, until Waters and the trooper who was riding guidon, pushed their mounts to the head of the column, before wheeling into line and following.

Slow-rising pennons of dust swirled into the air as the detachment crossed the sun-baked length of the parade ground, heading for the ford. The rest of Troops D and F lined up before Dallas and Holland, who had put in his belated appearance, still buckling his saber and revolver in place.

The troops stood at attention, counting off rapidly, then were dismissed. Dallas turned toward Holland who nodded without smiling. Dallas acknowledged the silent greeting and Holland stalked off to join Blanche. But the brief look Dallas had obtained of Holland's face had shown him that there were no marks of any recent struggle upon Holland's rugged, dark-hued skin.

The sprinkling cart, drawn by two plodding Army mules, came around the rear of the sutler's store and rattled across the north end of the parade wetting down the dust. Dallas followed in its wake, intending to cut toward the barracks, and nearly collided with Roy Broderick and "Shorty" Russell. They pulled up short as he stopped directly in front of them.

Every muscle in Dallas drew taut. His eyes were narrowly alert.

"Did you sleep well, Shorty?" he asked.

The dark little man appeared startled—and wary.

"Since when has the Army started wet-nursing its guests!" he exclaimed.

Dallas kept looking at him, the sharpness of his scrutiny masked by a grin. There were no bruises on Russell's face and Broderick's features were also clear. Dallas was aware of a feeling of disappointment as he repeated his question.

"Did you, Shorty?"

Broderick cut in in his bluff, hearty voice.

"Sure, Lieutenant. We both pounded our ears plenty." His shrewd eyes peered steadily at the cavalry officer and in their depths Dallas thought he detected a flicker of amusement. "How about you?"

Broderick added. "Did you sleep well?"

The dark eyes held steadily to Dallas' face, cool and calm. Dallas felt his dislike for the man intensified. Broderick's manner was naturally sardonic. He made no pretense of admiring Army officers and he had reason to resent Dallas' periodic inspection of his freight shipments, so that could explain the faint note of mockery in the freight man's voice now—yet it could mean something else.

"Just fair," Dallas said curtly, as Russell started to walk away.

"Too bad," said Broderick tonelessly, also moving around Dallas. "Next time you're in Tucson, look me up."

Dallas let the two men walk on a few paces before he answered.

"I will," he murmured—and meant it. . . .

LIEUTENANT DALLAS brought his special detail of ten troopers back to Breadon just as the trumpets were blowing retreat. The swivel gun, discharged after the lowering of the colors, had already sent its booming echoes rumbling across the desert.

Now, as soldiers stood rigidly at attention all over the parade, facing the weatherbeaten flagpole, the color-sergeant folded the flag carefully in his arms, then fastened the halyard in place.

Slowly the trumpeters took their instruments away from their lips. The sad notes of retreat seemed to linger on in the dead heat, holding the troopers immobile until the last fading notes had died away. Then their cupped right hands snapped downward from their forage caps and they began moving off.

Dallas dismounted, handed the reins of his horse to a trooper. He stood listening to the murmur of conversation from the barracks, the banging of a hammer on an anvil over in the blacksmith shop beside the corral, the far-off yapping of an Indian dog.

But the sounds actually made little impression upon him, for he was thinking of the day's futile ride. They had picked up the trail of the raiders near Notah's camp, followed it until it struck the very trail Holland's detail had followed on their way in from the Pinals.

Five miles in the foothills the raiders had taken to a wide creek that slashed whitely down from the higher ridges and the soldiers had been unable to discover where their quarry had ridden out of the stream. On both sides stretched miles of rocky malpais that were bare of sign.

Finally Dallas had been compelled to acknowledge defeat and turn back. If any whites from the surrounding ranches or from Tucson had participated in the attack they had been careful to take a roundabout route through the Pinals before proceeding home.

"Did you have a grim day?" a soft voice behind him queried.

Dallas gave a slight start and pivoted. Blanche Raven had come up silently. She had changed to another cool dress, this one a light green with white at the neck and cuffs. She looked fresh, very much at ease, and the magic of her smile hammered at his senses.

"The trip was a waste of time," he said. Somehow he felt the dull heaviness of spirit leave him, and suddenly he wasn't as disappointed as his words indicated. Then, remembering his duty, he added

[*Turn page*]

Kidneys Must Remove Excess Acids

Help 15 Miles of Kidney Tubes Flush Out Poisonous Waste

If you have an excess of acids in your blood, your 15 miles of kidney tubes may be overworked. These tiny filters and tubes are working day and night to help Nature rid your system of excess acids and poisonous waste.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Kidneys may need help the same as bowels, so ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 50 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(Adv.)

briskly, "I'd better report to your father."

He started to move past her, but she placed her hand upon his arm.

"It can wait," she told him. "Dad sort of expected it. You can tell him about it at supper."

Dallas was acutely conscious of her warm fingers resting upon the sleeve of his tunic, and he found himself fighting the impulse to cover that small hand with his own. She seemed to sense his feelings and a wave of color swept up from the white arch of her throat, delicately tinting her cheeks. She withdrew her hand and looked away.

"Supper?" Dallas repeated.

Composure returned to Blanche. Her eyes shone up at him, friendly and gay.

"Why, yes," she said. "The commandant's orders. You are to take supper at Headquarters tonight, along with Frank and Lieutenant and Mrs. Holly Adkins."

Dallas frowned quickly. "Something up, Blanche?"

She shrugged. "The old story. Dad is worried about Naquino and the Indians at Notah's camp."

He stood straight and still before her. There was a somber cast to his wind and sun-reddened features.

"This is a hard land, Blanche," he murmured. "No one knows it better than your father."

She nodded, closely watching him, an unfathomable expression in her blue eyes. She put her hand on his arm again.

"Bob, you think about life too much. What you need is a girl."

A tight little silence fell between them. Dallas had never been more thoroughly aware of this girl's attraction for him than he was at this moment. Her beauty was a shining thing.

"I've got a girl," he said shortly.

She lifted startled eyes to him. He tried to mask the longing he feared must be plain in his face. But she missed the meaning of the intent look in his eyes. She was suddenly happy—for him.

"Why, Bob, I didn't know! Where? You must tell me about her!"

Floating across the parade, sharp and clear, came the trumpet notes sounding mess call. The sound of hammering in the blacksmith shop quit and two troopers, stripped down to undershirt and trousers, headed for the barracks to wash up. Other soldiers, idling in various parts of the camp, began tramping toward the long, rambling mess hall.

"I'll tell you about her some other time," Dallas said. "Now I've got to rush and clean up."

"You'd better hurry," she told him. "I persuaded Justin to bake a lemon meringue pie from some lemons and eggs I saved out of the last food shipment from Tucson."

"Just try and keep me away!" he said, and hurried off toward his 'dobe.

CHAPTER V

"Let the Aravaipas Work"

IT TOOK Dallas ten minutes to wash and shave and slip into some fresh clothes. Then he walked quickly to Headquarters. He found the others waiting for him in the big front room where a long table had been set.

Colonel Raven greeted him cordially, as did Lieutenant Adkins and his wife, a big, round-faced woman with auburn hair and laughing gray-green eyes. Holland merely nodded in his direction, and took particular pains to preempt a seat next to Blanche.

Raven sat at the head of the table, with Dallas facing him at the other end. The Adkins were opposite Blanche and Holland. They made polite, desultory conversation while Justin, a tall loose-limbed man with coal-black hair, who served as Colonel Raven's striker and cook, brought in a platter of steak, another platter of fresh corn, some boiled potatoes and biscuits.

Everyone ate heartily. There was a pitcher of lemonade, and also a bottle of red wine. Black coffee followed after all had sampled Justin's lemon meringue pie. Then Blanche and Mrs. Adkins rose from the table and wandered outside, leaving the men to talk.

Raven lighted up a cigar and Adkins, a slight, gray-haired man, tamped some tobacco in an old pipe and got it going. Raven turned first to Dallas.

"I don't suppose you picked up any sign of where that raiding party drifted to."

"No, sir," Dallas replied and gave a brief account of the day's ride into the desert.

"Shonten and his braves pulled in from their hunt late this morning," Raven informed Dallas. "He stopped by here to palaver. Notah was along, but Shonten did most of the talking."

"Yeah, and it wasn't nice to listen to," added Adkins, who also knew enough Apache to serve as an interpreter. "Shonten kicked up a big row about the raid. He blamed the Army—said the Indians had been persuaded to settle near the camp for protection. But the Army wasn't giving them protection when it let renegade Tontos kill old men and squaws."

Knots of muscle stood out along the line of Dallas' jaw.

"Did anyone tell him that the raiders might have been whites?"

"Yeah," said Adkins. "Notah told him. He wasn't impressed."

"Shonten was pretty ugly," Raven admitted. "He said the Aravaipas were much better off when they were roaming the hills and hinted he might try to pull the whole tribe away with him. That's one thing I can't let happen. Shonten is young, and he's a hothead. If he pulls out he's apt to join Naquino."

"It's my opinion that's where he was on his hunt," Holland cut in, his voice sharp and brittle.

"I think you're wrong, Frank," Dallas said.

"Can you prove it?" Holland snapped.

Raven held up his hand. "Let it go, gentlemen. Either of you may be right. The point is I haven't enough soldiers in Breadon to spare a detail at Notah's camp and they refuse to move in here."

"You'd want them?" Holland looked astonished.

"They'd crowd the camp," Raven admitted, "but maybe it would help until the Bureau of Indian Affairs decides whether or not to establish a reservation here."

"You'll have a long wait was Adkins' opinion.

"And I agree," said Holland distinctly. "I wouldn't trust any Apache as far as I could throw Breadon's swivel gun."

"You put it kind of strong," Dallas stated. "There are good Apaches and bad Apaches, just as there are good white men and bad."

"If there are good Apaches I've never seen them." There was determination in Holland's voice. "They've brought nothing but torture and death and destruction to the Territory since I've been here. Emigrant trains attacked, Broderick's freight wagons smashed, his drivers tortured, cattle ranches gutted."

Holland's temper rose until a feeling of tension vibrated in the room. Dallas' lips gradually thinned, betraying the anger that gripped him.

"That's all true enough," he said with dangerous softness. "But have you ever stopped to ask yourself the why of those Apache raids? Do you realize the white men have been pushing the Indians around since the earliest history of our country? We're sitting on Apache hunting ground now. We've made all kinds of promises to the Apaches and broken them without a thought."

DALLAS paused, but before Holland could break in, he went on doggedly, vibrantly.

"Take the Pinal 'treaty'—when Colonel King Woolsey, aid to the Governor of Arizona, tricked Paramucka and his Pinal Coyoteros into attending a peace conference, then killed most of them in cold blood. And don't forget Mangus Colorado, the old Mimbreno chief, and how he was flogged by a bunch of Piños Altos miners when he offered to lead them to a big vein of gold. Is it any wonder that most of the Apaches would rather go on killing and raiding than trust the promises of the white man?"

Holland's lip curled disdainfully. "If you love the Indians so much, why don't you quit the Army and go and live with them."

"This is no time for personal enmity, Mr. Holland," Raven said curtly. He hesitated, then added, "I can see you think the Army has not been tough enough."

"Not nearly enough, sir," Holland replied. "I say go on fighting the Apaches until we've wiped them out."

"For Naquino and his Tonto renegades I agree that that is the only policy for the Army to pursue," Raven said. "But the Indians who have tried to be friendly—I

don't know." He looked at Dallas. "Have you any suggestions about how we can keep the Aravaipas in line?"

"I have, sir," Dallas replied instantly. "I've been thinking about it a lot and I have a plan which might work."

"Well, let's hear it. Heaven knows we haven't enough troops here to fight the Tontos and the Aravaipas, too."

"First," said Dallas, "the Aravaipas don't have enough to do in their camp and their few crops have been poor. We've got a few Missouri and Indiana farmers in Troop D. One or two of them know a little about irrigation. Let them give Notah's braves some help in planting beans and squash and potatoes and show them how to build irrigation ditches and divert some of the water from the Santa Cruz River."

"You'll never get those braves to work," Holland cut in.

"Agent John Clum did it with his Aravaipas and Rio Verdes at San Carlos," Dallas said, turned away from Holland and addressed himself directly to the commandant. "Let them grow hay and barley so the post can buy it from them. If you don't want to pay them in money, issue scrip so they can exchange it for goods at the sutler's store."

"What about Roy Broderick?" Holland inquired.

Adkins grinned. "I was going to ask the same thing."

"What about him?" snapped Dallas impatiently. "The Army is under no obligation to him. We'll be able to buy barley and hay for winter feed a lot cheaper from the Indians than we could from Broderick who must add the cost of freighting the stuff to his prices."

"Suppose he goes out of business?" Adkins asked.

"He won't. The Army will still need plenty of things that only Broderick can freight in." Again Dallas looked at Raven. "You've been wanting a new and larger guardhouse, sir. Why not let the Aravaipas build it and pay them for it? You'll find them a lot happier with work to do and with some tangible return for their efforts.

"And there's another thing. You said you can't spare soldiers to guard Notah's camp. All right. I suggest you appoint a half-dozen Indian policemen to guard the camp and keep law and order. They'll be particularly useful in handling some of Shonten's warriors who have been cooking *tiswin* in the hills. The two times we broke up *tiswin* parties there was considerable ill feeling among the younger Indians. So let Notah and his police handle it and the culprits punished by the Indians themselves."

"You forget I'm not an Indian agent," Raven pointed out.

"With the Bureau of Indian Affairs considering Breadon as a reservation I think you could safely assume the necessary powers, sir. After all, the Aravaipas have come here seeking your protection. They've been getting a weekly beef ration just as if they were part of a reservation. Why not go all the way?"

THERE was a brief silence. Then Adkins removed his pipe from his mouth and stared thoughtfully into the smoking bowl.

"It's an idea, Colonel," he said, after a moment.

"You give the Apaches all that freedom and they'll go hog-wild," Holland predicted darkly.

Raven rose stiffly from the table. Leaning on his cane, he hobbled toward the screen door and stared out into the starlit night. When the sprinkling cart rumbled past he turned back to his officers.

"Mr. Dallas, you've given me something to think about. Clum did it at San Carlos. Maybe we can do it, too. Meanwhile, gentlemen, I want to thank you for joining me here and for your opinions."

They all rose, aware that this was an unspoken dismissal. They had moved to the door when Raven called Dallas back.

"The sutler informed me today that we are low on flour, molasses, blankets, carbines and side arms ammunition," the commandant murmured. "Our last shipment was a large one and there should be an ample supply left from it. Check into it for me."

"Yes, sir," Dallas answered, saluting crisply.

He walked out through the screen door and nearly collided with Holland. But he was not surprised to find the lieutenant there when he saw Blanche walking hurriedly across the parade toward them.

"Have you men finished your weighty

discussions?" Blanche asked with an attempt at gaiety.

Holland nodded and said rather quickly, "Let's walk, Blanche. We've a few minutes before tattoo."

"Certainly," she said. She waved to Dallas. "Good night, Bob."

"Good night."

CHAPTER VI

Out of Bounds

UNLIKE THE houses along Officers' Row and the barracks, the sutler's store was constructed of peeled logs, chinked with mud and clay. It was a low, crude-looking affair with a sloping roof and two small windows cut into the front wall on either side of the narrow door.

The smell of saddle leather, molasses and stale whisky hit Dallas as he entered the store. One side was taken up by an unpainted bar from which Lew Nixon, the sutler, dispensed drinks to thirsty soldiers. There were three tables over in a corner, empty now since it lacked only a few minutes of tattoo.

On the other side of the room was a board counter, several shelves on which were stacked blankets, flour, sugar, boxes of ammunition. There were pegs to hold saddles, and racks of carbines. The shelves and pegs were almost bare.

"Evening, Lieutenant," Nixon greeted Dallas, looking up from a tally sheet on the counter in front of him.

The sutler was a hollow-cheeked man, not over-friendly. He was almost completely bald, except for a narrow rim of gray-black hair that ran around the back of his head from temple to temple.

"Good evening," said Dallas, and came directly to the point. "I'm glad you've got your records in front of you. I'd like to check them."

"What for?" Nixon's high, reedy voice was filled with outrage.

"Colonel Raven's orders. He thinks we're using up field supplies too fast."

"So he sends you to snoop!" Anger pulled Nixon's almost lidless gray eyes close together. "Go ahead. You won't find anything wrong."

Dallas moved to the counter. Taking out a penciled list of figures from his pocket, he compared the items on it with the items on Nixon's tally sheet.

"Everything seems to be in order," he said. "Except for one thing."

Nixon thrust his face forward. "And what's that?" he demanded belligerently.

"The tally sheets show that we received a heavy shipment of goods during the past month, yet your shelves are almost empty."

Nixon's anger showed in the pallor of his skin.

"Dallas, you've got the devil of a nerve if you think I've been taking the stuff."

"I didn't say that," Dallas snapped, not liking this job and not liking the sutler's arrogance.

"In the past month we've had more details in the field than ever before," Nixon said heatedly. "That uses up guns and ammunition—and it uses up blankets and food. Check up on that and you'll see I'm right."

Nixon was holding himself rigid now, his arms stiff at his sides, his meaty fists clenched. Anger flamed in his eyes. Yet behind the anger, behind the arrogance, was the shadow of something else—something that might have been fear or nervousness.

"I'll check on it," Dallas promised. He turned to move around the counter, but stopped when a girl walked out into the store from the living quarters at the rear. "Hello, Mae," he greeted.

Mae Nixon, slender, small, with a superficial sweetness in her face, and cheeks that had been lightly tinted with rouge came up to the counter beside him.

"Hello, Bob." Her gray-green eyes looked up at him impishly before her long lashes narrowed down over them. "Did you come to see me or to fight with Dad?"

Nixon growled an oath before Dallas could reply. "Did you ever see the day when the Army wasn't suspecting me of cheating on its supplies?" snapped the sutler. "Better take him out of here, Mae. He riles me."

"Hear that, Bob?" There was laughter in Mae's voice. She glanced once at her father, her eyes steady, then she deliber-

ately winked. "Don't let him fool you. He's not nearly as tough as he sounds."

Dallas was about to say he didn't care how tough Nixon wanted to appear, but Mae slipped an arm through his.

"Seriously, Bob," she added, "it's a nice night for walking. And I haven't a thing to do."

SHE HAD a way of turning a little to one side when looking at a man so that her face was in profile and her eyes slanted up just a trifle at the corners, giving them a slightly exotic cast. She was turned that way now, wanting him to see how pretty she was.

But somehow she left him cold. He understood her. She was a flirt. Any good-looking enlisted man or officer was fair game for her. One night found her walking with Sergeant Modoc, the next with Trumpeter Ronald or Corporal Lavelle.

They had moved out into the darkness now. Dallas gently disengaged her hand from his arm.

"Not tonight," he said. "I've got to catch up on some sleep." He grinned down at her. "Besides, I don't want to cut in on Modoc's time."

Even as he spoke the random thought occurred to him that at most Army posts the sutler's daughter wouldn't have presumed to demand the attentions of a cavalry officer. But at isolated posts such as Breadon, where details were constantly going out on field duty, there was bound to be a slight relaxation of discipline and the unwritten rules of behavior.

Rules or not, Mae Nixon was saucy enough to ignore them completely. She showed her displeasure by stamping on Dallas' foot.

"I don't care a fig about Modoc!" she said in protest. He said nothing, anxious to be away. But she held him there. "You're a fool," she added viciously, "if you think you have a chance with Blanche. You're wasting time."

Still he said nothing. But her keen eyes detected the strained tightness in his face. She was immediately contrite.

"Forgive me, Bob. It's none of my business. Good night."

She walked off toward the parade. Dallas stood there, his mind and heart alive with the image of Blanche which Mae had called up. Finally he swung off toward the stables.

He spent ten minutes checking some of Troop D's mounts and talking to the farrier sergeant while the sound of the trumpets blowing tattoo echoed across the desert.

Wandering out of the stables, he went back toward the sutler's store, heading for Officers' Row. Suddenly a few feet in front of him two shadows moved. He was about to call out when he saw the shadows merge and knew that he was witnessing an embrace between a man and a woman.

Dallas halted, caught in an awkward situation. He did not wish to advertise his position by moving on. Waiting there, the shadows broke apart. The girl called, "Good night," softly and hurried away.

Dallas recognized Mae's voice and started to retreat. But the man turned and walked right toward him.

"Who's that?" came the hard, biting question from Frank Holland's thin lips.

Dismally Dallas realized that he had unwittingly let himself in for some unpleasant moments.

"Sorry, Frank," he said. "Didn't mean to walk in on you."

"Walk in on me!" repeated Holland angrily. "Why, you were probably spying on me!"

Dallas whipped his answer back, straight and hard. "Watch it, Frank."

Holland strode a pace nearer. "I'll watch nothing! I'll tell you to stay way from me, and stay away from Blanche."

Trouble was here between them again, building up its irresistible pressure. And as Dallas' rage grew he found himself hoping for the break.

"All right, Frank," he murmured in a dust-dry tone. "You asked for it. Blanche has made her choice. That's fine, but you're not good enough for her."

"Maybe you think you're good enough," Holland's voice was low and deadly.

"No. But for a man who is engaged to marry the finest girl in the world you ought to be able to keep your hands off another woman."

Holland plunged forward swiftly. In the darkness Dallas missed his intention. Too late he saw the swing of Holland's arm, the looping white arc of his knuckles. He tried to roll with the punch, but it caught him along the side of the head and

dumped him backward. He hit the ground on his shoulder blades, aware of a dull, throbbing ache in his head.

THEN anger came and he climbed to his feet. He rushed toward Holland, then stopped when boots crunched along the gravel nearby and a hearty voice boomed out:

"Holland! That you?"

It was Holly Adkins. He blundered up out of the shadows, treading heavily. He whirled to one side as he became aware of Dallas.

"Hello, Bob. This is fine, meeting both of you."

He drew them into the beam of light issuing from the sutler's store. If he noticed the thinly tethered violence in his two fellow officers he gave no sign of it.

"Edith's developed a sudden headache," he told them. "She'll be going to bed. So why not come over to my 'dobe and play a few hands of poker."

"Not for me," said Holland curtly. "You cleaned me the other night. I'm strapped until the paymaster comes at the end of the week."

Adkins made a wry, disappointed face. "This is a fine post. Nobody has money." He looked at Dallas. "Want to play two-handed?"

Dallas shook his head. "Not much sport that way."

"Yeah. You're right." Adkins dug his pipe out of his tunic and thrust it into his mouth. "Guess I'll go to bed, then. Good night."

But he didn't immediately leave. He waited, watching them both, until Holland moved up beside him. Holland turned, his eyes going to Dallas' face.

"Some other time," Dallas said then, and the flat, toneless quality of his voice told Holland that the words were meant expressly for him, and did not refer to a future poker game with Adkins. . . .

Lieutenant Dallas was at the breaking corral the next morning watching two soldiers take the kinks out of several wild broncs—the last of a new shipment of cavalry horses—when a trooper came up to him with a message that he was wanted at Headquarters.

He left Sergeant Modoc in charge at the corral, then walked to Colonel Raven's 'dobe. At the entrance he met Holland, coming from the opposite direction. Holland nodded stiffly.

"Ah, good morning, Dallas—and Holland," the commandant greeted them, rising from his desk.

"Good morning, sir," came their joint answer.

"I didn't send for you, Holland," said Raven, "but I'm glad you came." He turned suddenly to Dallas. "You've heard me speak of my friend, Major Devore at Fort Huachuca. We went through the Point together. We were together at Cedar Mountain and Chancellorsville and at Gettysburg. And we were both at Fort Stanton until we were given separate post commands.

"Devore's wife was a close friend of Blanche's mother. She's very ill and needs help in taking care of two young children, the sons of Devore's youngest brother and his wife who were killed in a train wreck in Kansas. Blanche has volunteered to go and I want you to take an escort of eight men and see that she arrives there safely."

Holland drew himself up and spoke in a strained voice.

"May I ask for that assignment in place of Lieutenant Dallas? You know how I—how Blanche and I—" He broke off in confusion as Blanche walked into the room.

"I thoroughly understand," Raven said. "I have you in mind for the next scout detail, so Dallas will be in charge of the escort. It will give him an opportunity to stop off in Tucson on the way back and check Broderick's next freight shipment to the post."

Blanch, chic in a gray riding habit, rushed across the room to take Holland's arm.

"Don't look so glum, darling," she said. "My being away from you a couple weeks will be good for both of us. It'll make you miss me."

"You take it rather lightly," he accused.

"That's not so, Frank. I'd like you to be going, but you know how Dad is. There's always a purpose behind what he does. This time I'm afraid he sees a way to get rid of me and have Bob look into the freight shipments at the same time."

Raven took Blanche by the shoulders and steered her toward the door.

"You run along and finish your packing,

Blanche," he said, "and let me handle the other details."

She saluted primly, made a face at her father, then winked at Dallas and Holland before running off.

"Holland," Raven added to the scowling lieutenant, "if you ever manage to drag Blanche to the altar you'll have to be firm with her. I've had to be, or she'd be running this post to suit herself. She almost had me talked into letting Mr. Holland command the detail."

He chuckled good-naturedly, in his eyes a momentary merriment. It vanished before the unsmiling gravity of Holland's face. He looked slowly from Holland to Dallas, and something came and went in the tired gray eyes before he spoke briskly to Dallas.

"Can you be ready to leave in less than an hour?"

"Yes, sir."

Raven nodded and dismissed them both.

CHAPTER VII

Indian Sign

HOLLAND and Dallas moved out beyond the ramada, pausing briefly at the edge of the parade to measure each other for a long, hard interval.

"I don't know what Raven's trying to do," Holland said through lips that were a thin red slash against his dark skin, "but don't forget during your trip to Huachuca that Blanche is out of bounds for you."

Dallas faced him squarely, rocking back and forth on his heels. "You might do a little remembering yourself," he said. "Remember Blanche the next time you go walking with Mae Nixon."

Black rage stormed through Holland and he trembled before Dallas as if a great wind were buffeting him. He was so wild that he couldn't find words. And Dallas left him that way, turning on his heel to cross over to the corral.

Dallas had Modoc pick out eight men from D troop who had not been on any recent scout detail, personally supervised the selection of the horses, and had Modoc issue extra carbine and side arm rounds to each soldier. Canteens were filled, a day's food rations were procured from the mess kitchen and carefully packed.

Trumpeter Harry Ronald persuaded Dallas to let him take the place of one of the other troopers. Ronald was young and new to the service, but because he had already shown considerable courage under fire and was a strong hand with a carbine, Dallas let him go.

They got under way at nine o'clock with Dallas and seven of the troopers flanking the weather-beaten Army ambulance in which Blanche rode. In the ambulance were also the extra canteens and the food. The eighth trooper sat on the low seat of the ambulance to guide the double team of Army mules.

Crossing the Santa Cruz River at the gravelly ford, they swung into a hard, beaten trail along the river's western boundary and followed it straight south.

Slowly the sun wheeled high into the brassy sky and heat danced in shimmering waves above the rolling desert land. Dust boiled up under the rattling wheels of the ambulance, then seemed to hang still and static around horses and men so that the two troopers guarding the rear were perpetually pushing through a choking gray cloud.

After a while they turned inland and traversed several rolling hills on which were patches of cholla cactus, white-blooming Spanish bayonet, spiny-branched ironwood, tarragon and golden gilia.

At noon they halted near a bend in the river for a meal of bacon, beans, cold biscuits and coffee. Saddle cinches were loosened and the horses were allowed to graze.

They went on again, then, riding the whole afternoon, arriving in Tucson after sunset. The troopers pitched camp outside the town, but Dallas got a hotel room for Blanche.

They had dinner together in the hotel dining room along with a sprinkling of bearded prospectors, tradesmen and a few well-dressed Mexicans. Then Blanche, tired from the long jolting ride, went up to bed.

The next morning the detail continued southward into dryer, rougher country.

Hills and ridges became more numerous. Barrel cactus, cholla and catclaw bloomed on every slope. Far in the distance, almost lost in the heat haze, loomed lofty Huachuca Peak, towering more than eight thousand feet into the Arizona sky.

Now the troopers rode with greater vigilance. Dallas had spent a good portion of the preceding day riding beside the ambulance to talk to Blanch, but now he stayed well out in front, searching the hills and brush.

The two troopers at the rear dropped further back. Two more soldiers rode far out on each flank. And up ahead two men were scouting along the trail, topping each rise or pitch in ground well in advance of the rest of the detail.

Near noon Trumpeter Ronald rode in from the right flank to speak to Dallas.

"Smoke up there in the hills, sir."

DALLAS glanced off to the southwest. A low range of mountain stringers threw their rugged spires toward the fleecy clouds. Box elder, ash, black cottonwood and post oak grew in serried rows along the steep slopes. But above them, along the rimrock, a thin streamer of smoke hung motionless in the air. Even as they watched, the column of smoke wavered and puffed upward in an expanding white ball.

"Apaches, I reckon," said Ronald.

Dallas nodded. "Might be some of Naquino's bunch." He swung his horse and cantered back to the ambulance.

"Get these mules moving faster, Adams," he directed the trooper who was tooling the team.

Blanche had been looking toward the mountains.

"I saw smoke, Bob," she said gravely. "Do you think Apaches are over there?"

Dallas' keen glance studied the brush clumps.

"It's more than likely."

"Naquino?" she asked.

"Maybe. Those Tontos and Chiricahuas can cover a lot of ground in a short time. One day in the Pinals, the next swinging through the Huachucas and the Mules. I reckon the Army hardly makes a move without Naquino knowing about it."

He rode off, ranging far ahead to consult with the advance scouts. He took out his saddle carbine, examined it carefully, and replaced it in the scabbard. The detail was moving faster now. At Dallas' order the rear guard closed in. Every trooper rode stiffly alert.

They cut into a mile-long canyon, the high walls shutting out the sun. In the cool, semi-darkness of the defile the beat of hoofs and the clatter of the ambulance seemed abnormally loud. Without any order from Dallas the troopers rode with their carbines across the pommels of their high-forked saddles.

Dallas' eyes roved restlessly from one side of the canyon to the other, searching out every nook and cranny in the rocks. He was aware of a definite uneasiness. Cold sweat began to seep out on his forehead.

"Hold it," he said suddenly, his voice echoing sharply along the defile and bringing the detail to a halt. The ambulance creaked to a stop. Ronald and another trooper drifted back to him. They regarded him inquiringly.

"What is it, Bob?" Blanche asked, and now for the first time she sounded tense.

[*Turn page*]

"I'm Going to Find the Skunks Who Killed Joe Dennison!"

WHEN Bill Gillaine found the body of his trapping partner sprawled awkwardly in the trail, there was a long, feathered arrow buried half its length above Joe Dennison's heart. And there and then, Bill Gillaine determined to avenge his friend—at any cost.

Follow Gillaine on his exciting quest in IRON TAIL'S ARROW, a stirring novel of Civil War days by HARRY RUBICAM, JR. It's an epic of bitter feuds in Colorado—of Cheyennes on the warpath—of deathless loyalty and courage! Breath-taking from start to finish, IRON TAIL'S ARROW brings back the Old West in all its colorful glory! Look forward to this splendid yarn in next month's issue.

Her eyes had darkened, and there was a taut, alert lift of her head.

"I don't like the feeling of this place," Dallas said.

He peered over his shoulder along their back-trail. The blood pounded in his temples. The cool, dry air in the canyon should have been refreshing, yet he found it hard to breathe.

The feeling grew upon him that the canyon was a trap. If Apaches were lying in ambush around the next bend the detail would be annihilated. He had no right to risk the lives of the men in his command unnecessarily. To this was added a nagging fear, that was like a miasmic fog in his brain, for Blanche's safety.

Suddenly he jerked up his head and sniffed the air. "Do you smell smoke, Ronald?" he asked the trumpeter.

Ronald tested the air with his nose. "Yes, sir. Wood smoke."

Seconds dragged by. And still that unnerving silence filled the canyon. Dallas' strong fingers knotted about the leather reins.

"Ronald and Adams," he said crisply. "You'll ride ahead with me. We'll scout the rest of the canyon before we proceed any farther. If Naquino is up there we may still have time to draw back." He turned to the soldiers who had formed the rear guard. "Drop back to the entrance. Fire one shot if you see anything wrong."

The troopers whirled their mounts and trotted back down the defile. Dallas peered at Blanche. He tried to smile, yet it didn't alter the gravity in his eyes.

"You'd better remain here with the rest of the detail," he said. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

Blanche returned his gaze levelly. "It's all right, Bob. You go on."

Admiration for Blanche's cool courage swept through Dallas before he cantered off with Ronald and Adams.

THEY rode single-file, with Dallas in the lead. It was only a matter of seconds before they reached the bend. The twisting trail beyond it was empty and still. They moved on at a slow, cautious pace. Every bush along the sloping walls drew their attention.

Dallas' nerves were stretched wire-thin. At every step he took he expected the air to ring to the whoops of charging Apaches. He waited for the sibilant whir of arrows, the crash of rifles. But nothing broke the unbearable quiet.

At last they came to the canyon's exit and found themselves at the edge of Pantana Wash. The steep-banked arroyo curved away across a wide plain that ended in a serried line of hills.

But it wasn't the wash or the the tree-studded ridges that interested Dallas and his men as they came to a halt staring straight ahead. Just a hundred and fifty yards away were the charred remains of an emigrant wagon. A few wisps of gray smoke spiraled lazily from blackened timbers.

As the soldiers pushed forward, the smell of smoke was interlaced with another, more unpleasant smell. The smell of death.

They dismounted and approached the wreckage on foot. Amid the burned ribs of the wagon lay scorched pots and pans, a smashed barrel, the remains of a bed, a few tins of food. Beside the wagon-tree sprawled a bearded man. Half a dozen Apache arrows had pierced his body. His work-roughened hands still gripped a rifle.

Under a lance-leaved cottonwood Dallas found a middle-aged woman. She undoubtedly had been the settler's wife. She had been shot. The two harness mules had been hauled off to a ravine and destroyed.

The Army had issued numerous warning, advising settlers in the Territory not to travel without an escort. Again and again the warning was disregarded. This was the tragic result.

Dallas rose, after carefully studying the ground around the wagon.

"These Apache tracks are only about three hours old," he said to Ronald in a troubled voice. "Naquino is somewhere nearby. We'll try to make the Edson ranch on Pantana Wash. It's ten miles away, but it's our best bet."

Dallas sent Adams hunting for a spade among the wreckage to bury the two settlers. The search proved fruitless so they had to be content with rolling the bodies into the wash and covering them with stones.

While Adams took care of this, Ronald rode back to order the rest of the detail up. Within ten minutes the ambulance

rocked into view behind the four mules.

Dallas signaled the driver to tool the ambulance well beyond the ruins before stopping. Then he cantered over to Blanche. Her eyes grew wide and dark when she stared at the burned wagon and the slaughtered mules.

"Was it bad, Bob?" she asked in a husky whisper.

"Bad enough," he told her. "Naquino is somewhere in the vicinity. That signal fire we saw up on the peak probably told him all he needs to know about us."

She did not flinch at his bluntness. She was an Army girl, accustomed to the rigors and dangers of frontier existence. If she was afraid it was because she thoroughly understood their peril.

"There's Edson's ranch," she pointed out with a coolness that startled Dallas.

"That's where we're headed," he replied.

Ronald looked at Blanche, at her fair skin that was so evenly browned, at her calm blue eyes, and an involuntary shudder passed over him.

"If Naquino knows we're here he'll figure us to go to Edson's," he protested.

"Of course," snapped Dallas, his brisk voice belying the bleak look on his face. "The thing for us is to beat him there."

Adams came running back from the wash, panting from his exertions in burying the settlers.

Sweat streamed down his face. He caught up his horse, swung into saddle. Then Dallas lifted his hand and the detail clattered on.

CHAPTER VIII

Battle of the Ranchhouse

GLITTERING brightly on the mica particles in the soil, the sun blazed down. Dust swirled all around them. It got into their throats. Thirst began to nag at them. Dallas distributed the spare canteens which had been refilled before leaving Tucson.

They covered five miles at a fast pace. Three soldiers roamed ahead now, but they rode with less caution. There was too little time for that. They had to risk an ambush if they hoped to reach Edson's ranch in time.

The wash sloped toward higher ground. Trees grew more thickly as they approached the foothills of the Mule Mountains. Huachuca Peak with its broad spires covered with ponderosa pine, birch, box elder and locust was fully outlined now.

They were two miles from the ranch when they heard a crashing sound in the brush off to the right of the trail. Dallas whirled away from the ambulance, with Ronald following. Both men swung their carbines into line, ready for action. Then the bushes parted and a winded horse stampeded into the trail.

A bare-headed, chaps-clad cowpuncher swayed in the saddle. His features lit up briefly when he sighted the blue cavalry uniforms. Then pain came back into his eyes and he clawed at the horn as a lurch of his horse nearly threw him out of saddle.

An Apache arrow quivered in his back, right between the shoulder blades, and a lance had gashed the side of his neck.

"Naquino—Apaches—fifty of them!" he blurted thickly to the lieutenant. "Coming this way—got two of the hands—running off cattle!"

There was more, but Dallas could not distinguish the words. He stared at the cowboy's foam-flecked horse, decided that the animal would just about last to the ranch and swung around.

"Ride!" he yelled. "Full gallop."

The trooper on the ambulance lashed the mules into a fast run. Blanche was thrown to the bed of the wagon, and clung to the sides to keep from being tossed out. The detail swept on across the rolling ground.

Behind them they heard a dim yell. Dallas turned in the saddle. A knot of horses spilled out of the chaparral a mile away. Lean, brown bodies swayed to the motion of those horses. Sunlight gleamed on Apache lance or rifle.

The Indians came on fast, closing up the gap between their quarry and themselves at an alarming rate, their yelling more distinct. A rifle cracked. Then another.

Up ahead loomed a cluster of frame and log buildings set back about a hundred

yards from the wash. A man appeared in the bunkhouse door, saw the approaching riders, then ducked back inside. Reappearing, he raced across the yard to the main building, carrying several rifles in his arms.

Dallas urged the detail on still faster. The Indians were close now. He could see their fierce, painted faces, their straining muscular bodies. Again a rifle cracked. And this time the bullet narrowly missed the ambulance. Then the soldiers hit the yard, leaped from their moving horses as a heavy volley from the Apaches spilled a lethal spray of lead all around them.

Ronald raced over to the cowpuncher and caught him as he toppled out of the saddle. With Adams supporting the wounded man on the other side, Ronald hustled him into the ranchhouse.

Dallas reached Blanche as she jumped out of the ambulance. They ran through the open door. An Apache arrow struck the door jamb and a rifle bullet pounded into the hall, not hitting anything.

The rest of the soldiers piled into the wide front room. Then a huge, red-headed man—Harry Edson—slammed the door and dropped the heavy wooden bolt into place. The bearded, bowlegged man who had raced across the ranch yard with the rifles was already kneeling by a window, firing at the Apaches.

"Scatter and take your posts at the windows!" Dallas ordered. Then, swinging around to Blanche, he said: "Stay down and out of the line of fire."

He dived to a small window, his carbine in his hand. The pane blew in with a splintering crash as two lead slugs droned through and smacked into the far wall.

Throwing the carbine to his shoulder, Dallas had a clear view of a howling band of savages converging upon the ranchhouse. Stripped down to breech-clouts and moccasins, streaks of livid paint smeared on their faces and lean brown bodies, the Apaches rushed in for the kill.

Two of them left their saddles as Dallas' carbine roared twice. Then a wicked volley of lead poured from every window of the ranchhouse as the soldiers and ranchmen opened up with their rifles.

Three more Indian horses went down. Two warriors flipped over the backs of their mounts, landed in the dust, and were immediately trampled by riders coming up behind them. A third Apache galloped right up to Dallas' shattered window. His fierce eyes glared balefully into Dallas' face. His arm drew back, hurled his lance. The lance shot past Dallas and struck the bowlegged puncher as he was running low past the window to shift his position. Dallas triggered twice, the shots exploding right in the Apache's face.

The horse crashed into the front wall, catapulting the dead Indian over its head and into the room. Dallas kicked him aside, fired again at another screaming warrior, then yelled at his troopers.

"Two men take the rear! They're aiming to circle!"

Adams and another cavalryman ran through the hall to the rear of the log ranchhouse. The rhythmic pounding of their rifles told that they were making it hot for the Indians back there.

Blanche had gone to the bowlegged man, who was sprawled on the floor behind Dallas. The Apache lance had hit him high up in the shoulder. Dallas took time to pull the lance free. Blanche ran into another room, came back with a bed sheet, and began tearing it into strips. She cleaned out the wound with some fresh water and made a crude bandage for it.

Abruptly the firing quit and the Apaches withdrew to Pantana Wash about seventy yards away. The ranchhouse faced the deep arroyo and as the Indians dropped out of sight the soldiers leaned back and took their first brief rest.

Adams and the other cavalrymen came on from the rear of the house, scooping fresh shells out of their uniform pockets and levering them into their carbines. Edson rose and tramped over to Dallas. The rancher had a broad, freckled face and long, unkempt hair.

"You couldn't have come at a better time, Lieutenant," he said. "Cussed redskins won't give me any peace. Raided me just a month ago, wounded two of my rannies and ran off fifty head of prime beef stock. Can't even hire hands. Only four rannies left."

"You had four, Harry," Dallas said. He gestured to the puncher who had warned them of the attack and who now lay near death on a cot in the hall. "According to your man there, the Apaches killed two of your hands when they hit your cattle this afternoon."

Edson cursed. "It's time the Army drove every Apache out of the Territory!"

"Naquino's bunch of Tonto and Chiricahua renegades are the ones to blame."

"Naquino, Geronimo, Nana or Chato—what difference does it make? They're Apaches and murdering thieves!"

The rancher had good reason to be angry and there was no point in stirring him up more. Dallas turned away and walked into the hall, Edson following. Blanche had been bending over the wounded puncher's cot. She rose and shook her head.

"He's gone."

A livid red flame seemed to be kindled in the cowman's eyes. He stared down at the puncher's pale, immobile face.

"So help me," he murmured slowly, "I'll tally ten Apaches for you, Roberts." He looked up and said to Dallas, "Those red devils are sticking around. They tried to burn me out once. Let them try again."

"Lieutenant!" yelled Ronald. "They're getting ready to charge again!"

Dallas broke toward the window. Edson rushed back to his own post. Blanche dropped to the floor, crawled over to a corner of the room and began emptying rifle shells out of a stack of boxes. Quickly she went from man to man, distributing the extra rounds.

A few horses showed above the rim of the wash. Then a wave of horses broke over the top and sped toward the ranchhouse. Leading the band was Naquino himself—the most dreaded Apache in all the Arizona Territory.

Naquino was heavy-set and almost six feet tall. Racing nearer on a beautiful palomino, his broad dark face, disfigured by a livid hatchet scar on one cheek, looked sinister. He had only one eye. The skin had drawn together around the empty eye socket and his one good eye seemed, therefore, overlarge and incredibly evil.

Dallas centered his aim upon the big Tonto, but just as he let go with his shot, Naquino swerved and raced toward the side of the house. Dallas fired again and missed. All around him now the cavalrymen were firing. Here and there Apaches went down under that deadly, concentrated shooting from the house. But before they again withdrew to the wash, the bowlegged man had been drilled through the forehead by a Tonto bullet.

Edson and one of the troopers dragged the body into the hall. Blanche watched, the strain plain in her face. Dallas walked over to her, put his arm around her, and she leaned close.

"This is tough on you, Blanche," he said.

She managed a tremulous smile though the worry in her eyes was real and strong.

"No tougher on me than anyone else, Bob." She hesitated. "How long do you think they'll keep up?"

Dallas shrugged. "Depends on how badly Naquino wants to sack this place and how many braves he can afford to lose."

There was an enraged shout from Edson, from the rear. Dallas ran back. A small bunch of Tontos had sneaked well around to the rear and had fired the barn and the bunkhouse. Flames were licking along the walls and a black pall of smoke lifted into the lazy air.

"Curse their souls!" roared Edson. "They won't get away with that. Come on, Dallas! Get your soldiers and we'll charge them."

The cowman's hand was on the rear door when Dallas hauled him back.

"Naquino wants you to do just that, Harry. We haven't enough men or guns to risk it. Out in the open they'd mow us down. Believe me, our best bet is to stick here—at least until darkness. Too late now to save those buildings."

Edson mumbled imprecations as he stared out and watched the eager flames claim the dry, tindery wood of the bunkhouse.

"Better fill up all your pails with water and sand," Dallas advised. "And get plenty of blankets ready. They'll try the house next."

"Yeah," grunted Edson. "You're right. Let me have two men."

Dallas sent two troopers with the rancher. At the kitchen pump they filled pails and barrels with water, then carried them to strategic places in the house. Blankets were pulled off all beds and stacked up in the hall, ready for use.

Adams went down in the root cellar and brought up several buckets of dirt. He had just started toward the cellar for two more buckets when Edson sounded the warning of another attack.

Every man went back to his rifle. Again the Apaches poured out of the wash and

bore down upon the ranchhouse, firing as they came. Dallas winged one warrior, spilled a horse with another shot. The room echoed thunderously to the roar of shots. Bullets crashed into the walls. A trooper cried out in pain and fell backward, blood pouring from his mouth.

Four Tontos drifted away from the main band. They held fire-tipped arrows. Dallas brought down one as they fitted the arrows to their bows. The remaining warriors let loose their arrows. One fell short and spilled into the dust. But the other two whirred into the roof.

The firing continued as the Indians circled the house. Then a new puff of smoke reached them, coming down from the roof.

"Blankets!" shouted Dallas. "And a pail of sand!"

He ran to the hall, grabbed a pail of sand. Two troopers followed with blankets. Dallas went to a rear window and hoisted himself out. A bullet whined past him. He ignored it and swung up to the low, flat rof. One of the soldiers handed him his rifle and the bucket.

CHAPTER IX

At Bay

CROUCHING low, Dallas ran toward the front of the roof where bright red runnels of flame were licking along the timbers. Tilting the bucket, he sprayed sand in a thin, covering stream over the blaze.

A portion of the flames winked out. But fire started up in a fresh spot, carried by wind-driven sparks. He dumped the remaining sand on the blaze, then yelled for a blanket.

A trooper who had come up behind him passed him a blanket, then flung a shot into a wild-riding Tonto. The bullet sped wide and the Indian, loosing another flaming arrow that landed behind Dallas, let out a shrill whoop.

Apaches had bunched at the edge of the brush at the side of the house and were riding toward the three men fighting the fire.

"Take care of those Apaches!" Dallas yelled. "I'll handle the fire."

Guns roared in the yard. The lieutenant felt the hot breath of a bullet past his face. Then the heat of the fire drove against him. A new blaze had started where the last arrow had struck the roof. He attacked this point fiercely with the blanket. Again and again he beat at the flames, trying to smother the fire.

Two cavalrymen lay flat on their stomachs, pumping round after round into the charging Apaches. And from the house below them came the wicked song of other carbines blasting into the ranks of Naquino's warriors.

Suddenly the flames were extinguished. Dallas, smoke-grimed, exhausted and struggling for a breath of fresh air, threw down the blanket and rubbed a blackened hand across his singed eyebrows. He picked up his rifle and started to join the two troopers.

There was a sharp burst of shooting from the yard and one of the soldiers jerked up on his elbows, his head lolling limply on his neck, then plunged flat on his face.

Dallas crawled up beside him, saw that he was dead. Grimly, then, he placed his carbine to his shoulder and raked that dark wave of brown bodies in the yard with a rapid succession of shots. He kept firing until he had exhausted the shells in the magazine and the Indians had fled out of range.

He rose then and stared through the gathering dusk at the carnage below him. He could see the bodies of ten Apaches and knew there were others around the far side of the house. Even as he watched he saw a wounded Tonto drag himself to the edge of the wash, then flip over and out of sight.

He saw something else, too—only a portion of the Indians had withdrawn to the wash. Some had drifted into the thick brush beyond the smoldering bunkhouse. Others were holed up in the rocks to the rear.

He knew, then, that the Apaches would not give up at the approach of darkness. Naquino had lost many braves in this brief skirmish and he would stay until that debt was paid in blood—the blood of every white man in the ranchhouse. And with the coming of night nothing could stop the

Apaches from storming the house.

He turned to the soldier waiting beside him. "Time to get out of here," he said.

They bent down and picked up the lifeless body of the second trooper and hauled him to the edge of the roof at the rear. A low call brought Ronald and Adams to the window below them and the dead soldier was lowered. Then Dallas and the remaining soldier clambered down from the roof.

Blanche ran forward, a thankful light in her eyes as she grasped Dallas by the arms.

"Bob!" she whispered.

He grinned down at her, a ghastly travesty of a grin.

"It's bad, isn't it?" she said bluntly. "How long can we hold out?"

"We're about through," broke in Edson who heard the question. "Except for the loads in our carbines there's no more shells left."

Dallas looked at Blanche and felt fear move sickeningly through him.

"Extra bullets won't do much good from now on," he told the rancher, and explained how the Apaches had taken up their positions around the ranchhouse.

DOUBT spoke out of a great, angry despair.

"So the devils aim to finish us. Well, they'll find that Harry Edson takes a lot of killing." His voice dropped suddenly and his moody gaze shuttled to Blanche. "What'll you do about Blanche, Lieutenant?"

"Only one thing for all of us to do," Dallas answered. "Clear out as soon as it's full dark."

"I'm not moving off my ranch," Edson said.

"You haven't a chance if you stay," Dallas told him. "Naquino's Apaches will go through the place like a whirlwind. Our best bet is to scatter and make a run for it."

"They'll burn down the place," objected Edson.

"They'll do that anyway."

The room was almost completely dark now. Dallas could barely discern the six cavalrymen who were left. Even as they stood here the Apaches might be sneaking toward the house. There was no time to waste.

"Leave your carbines here," he ordered the soldiers. They stirred slightly in the darkness, tugging at their forage caps or wiping their moist hands along their blue pants. "See that your revolvers are loaded. And keep your knives handy."

Trumpeter Ronald stepped forward.

"If we get through, sir, where shall we meet?"

"Head for the Gila Ranch between here and Fort Huachuca. Wait until noon. If I'm not there by that time, ride on to the fort and get Major Devore to send out a full detachment after Naquino."

Blanche's face was a white mask in the gloom. Faintly she could see the way Dallas' hands fumbled at his belt. There was the gleam of a knife drawn out of a scabbard, then thrust back again.

"Come on," Dallas said to Blanche softly, and drew her forward. To Adams he said, "Take one other man and duck out the back way when I give the word. A couple of you take the side windows. Ronald, you and Edson had better go out one of the side windows, too."

At the front door Dallas groped blindly for the heavy bar, lifted it slowly. There was a deep, uneasy silence.

The darkness was solid and oppressive. No one moved. The only sound was the uneven rasp of their breathing. After a brief pause he swung the front door open.

Outside there was nothing but darkness —and silence. Dallas peered into the gloom, every sense alert. Somewhere in the brush Apaches were crawling toward the house, red death in their hands and hearts. He could not see them. He could not hear them. But they were there, just the same.

Another minute or two might bring their shadowy forms leaping out of the gloom. A chill raced up and down Dallas' spine. Blanche pushed close to him. She was trembling. Dallas could hear nothing but the dull pounding of his heart. He grabbed Blanche's arm.

"All right," he snapped, his voice was little more than a hoarse whisper.

Yet he knew it carried to the soldiers waiting behind him, for he heard them move away. Then he and Blanche left the door and dashed across the ranch yard.

The night swallowed them up and they ran blindly forward, angling for the first patch of brush near the arroyo. And all

the while the threat of peril was like a tremendous heel grinding down upon Dallas.

A gun blasted somewhere behind the ranchhouse. The sound pulled Dallas and Blanche to a halt close to the chaparral. Once, twice more that gun roared, followed by the crash and tumble of bodies in the brush. Then a man screamed. It was a shrill, unearthly scream filled with agony. And when the noise had dwindled away there remained only that ominous stillness.

Dallas' light but insistent pressure on Blanche's arm pushed her down to her knees. He came down beside her, slowly, stealthily he drew her forward. On hands and knees they crawled toward the wash, somewhere in the pitch blackness ahead of them.

THEY had gone several yards when he halted again. He stayed there, unmoving, striving to conceal the rasp of his breathing. There were Apaches close by. The very silence of the night told him that —and something deeper than the silence, a current of menace that ebbed and flowed in the darkness.

He tried to focus on the small area of yard that lay before them. He saw nothing, yet something warned him to remain still.

There was the faintest crunch of sound off to his left. Then the blackness over there seemed to move—and Dallas moved with it. He had his revolver in his hand and was leaping forward. He crashed into an Apache—he could tell that by the musky body smell, the greasy feel of the skin —and chopped down with the barrel of his gun. The Indian grunted and tried to wrench away.

Brush crashed in their brief struggle. A knife blade grazed Dallas' upper arm. Then he lashed at the Apache with the gun barrel with short vicious strokes, feeling the metal thud into flesh and bone at each blow, until at last the Indian fell away.

An owl hooted across the yard and Dallas imagined he heard stealthy movement in the brush all around him. He was sure the hoot of the owl was an Apache signal and the dismal knowledge came that the red warriors were closing in on him.

He swerved back to where he had left Blanche and found her gone! Panic hit him, then, and he felt as if the walls of his chest would burst from the suffocating beat of his heart. He threshed around, forgetting caution.

If the Apaches had gotten her! The grim thought drove him to a frenzy.

There was a sudden cry, faint and immediately cut off. It had come from near at hand. He dived forward blindly. His flailing arms struck a moccasined leg. The leg twisted in his grip, but he jerked backward. Two bodies rolled and fell against him. A strangled gasp from one told him it was Blanche. Then he was battling the Apache who had captured her.

A knife slashed his wrist. Warm blood ran down his left hand. He used his revolver as a club, pounding at the Apache while he held onto the Apache's knife wrist with his injured hand. Agony spun through him in excruciating waves. Powerful fingers fastened around his windpipe. His breathing was cut off. A roaring began in his ears.

In desperation he dropped his gun, clawed his knife from his belt and drove the long blade deep into the Apache's chest just as the warrior had twisted his own knife hand free.

Life drained swiftly out of the Indian. Dallas pushed his limp body away and rolled to his hands and knees.

"Bob!" Blanche's sibilant whisper reached him.

"Yes," he answered, groping for his gun.

There was a triumphant yell from a corner of the yard, the pad of moccasined feet toward this spot. The Apaches had him posted now and were moving in for the kill.

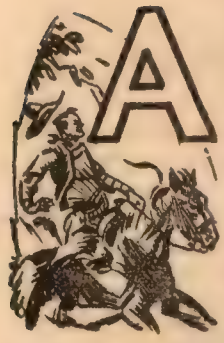
Sweat began to grease his forehead. Then his fingers found the gun, drew the hammer back to full cock. He looped his arm back and flung the weapon well away from him.

The thud of its landing was drowned out in the bellow of the shot as the hammer exploded one of the shells. There was an immediate answering yell from the Apaches. The sound of their pursuit swerved away.

Quickly Dallas grabbed Blanche by the arm and they crawled on toward the wash. They reached it and toppled over the lip. Dallas dug his hands into the soil to retard their fall. They slid into a clump of brush halfway down the deep side of the arroyo and burrowed deeper into its concealment.

CHAPTER X

The Fugitives



A TORTUOUS hour of waiting followed. Apaches scoured the ranch yard and all the surrounding brush looking for Dallas and Blanche and for the others who had fled from the house. Twice groups of Tontos dropped down into the wash and trod within a few feet of Dallas' hiding place, then went on.

After a while a deep, red glow filled the sky. Naquino's warriors had fired the ranchhouse. The flames blazed fiercely. Glowing sparks were carried into the dry stream bed by gusts of wind. Dallas and Blanche lay huddled in the bushes, hardly daring to breathe. They neither spoke nor moved, and their muscles grew cramped and stiff.

At last, the blaze died down and the far-off clatter of hoofbeats told them that the Indians had abandoned the hunt. Dallas helped Blanche to her feet. She swayed weakly against him and he put an arm around her.

"All right?" he inquired gently.

"I—I guess so," she whispered. "I thought we'd never—"

"We did cut things rather fine," he said.

His eyes had become used to the darkness now. And sporadic bursts of flame from the embers of Edson's ranchhouse provided additional light.

"Think you can do some traveling?" he asked.

"Anything you say."

Weary as he was, and aware of the strain Blanche had gone through, Dallas nevertheless decided it was safer to move on.

"Never can tell about those Apaches," he said. "We'll move on."

They climbed the wash and, keeping to the brush, started walking in the direction of Fort Huachuca.

They traveled for two hours, pausing about every twenty minutes for a rest. During the first brief stop Blanche became aware of Dallas' wounded wrist and made a crude bandage for it by ripping linen from her petticoat. The cut was not a deep one, but it ached painfully. At the end of the two hours Dallas noticed that the pace was telling on Blanche so he halted in a grove of trees.

"We'll spend the night here," he told her, as she sank to the soft grass beneath a thickly branched cottonwood. "You'd better try to get some sleep, Blanche."

She pulled him down beside her. He couldn't see her face clearly, but he was conscious of her body against his.

"You've done more than anyone, Bob. You need rest, too."

"Later," he promised. "I want to watch the trail a while."

He didn't tell her that the real reason why he wanted to stand guard was that with her so near to him, he wanted to take her in his arms. And he feared he would say things he had no right to say.

He stuffed his folded tunic beneath her head for a pillow and turned away.

"Thank you, Bob," she whispered and closed her eyes. Almost immediately she drifted off to sleep.

He moved away to stand near the trail's edge, all his senses alert. The night was quiet except for the hum of insects and the far-off cry of a coyote. At last, he could no longer fight off his weariness. He flung himself down in the grass near Blanche, and dropped off into a deep, dreamless slumber. . . .

When he awoke it was well past dawn, and Blanche was sitting up, fumbling with her curly hair.

"Good morning." Her smile was bright. She seemed to have fully recovered from the rigors of the day before.

He grinned back at her. "We both needed that sleep," he said. Then his face sobered. "But we've still got some walking ahead of us if we want to reach the Gila Ranch before noon."

They pushed on without delay. The sun came up, baking the land in its blistering rays. When they finally reached the Gila Ranch at eleven o'clock they were utterly spent.

DALLAS was happy to find Ronald and Adams and two other soldiers waiting at the ranch. All four had come through unscathed.

"I'm glad to see you, sir," said Ronald,

"and you, too, Miss Raven. We were beginning to fear Naquino had caught you."

"He didn't miss us by much," Dallas said ruefully. "See any sign of Edson or the others?"

"No, sir," Ronald answered. "I'm afraid they caught Edson when we first broke away from the ranchhouse. There were some shots, then someone screamed. It sounded like Edson."

Dallas nodded somberly and moved on to meet Eli Ferriss, who owned the Gila Ranch. Ferriss made Dallas and Blanche thoroughly at home. The rancher's wife took Blanche away to get freshened up and into some clean clothes. Dallas, too, washed up. Then they all sat down to a hearty meal.

At one o'clock when the two missing soldiers had not arrived, Dallas was obliged to conclude that they had been killed. He had lost half his detail of eight men. Yet if he had remained at Edson's place the entire detail, as well as Blanche and himself, would have been wiped out.

Borrowing horses from Ferriss, Dallas and Blanche and the four cavalrymen continued on to Fort Huachuca, arriving there near sundown.

Major Devore greeted them warmly and Blanche was immediately rushed off to see the commandant's ailing wife. Dallas gave the major a full report of the detail's brush with Naquino. Devore sent a dispatch rider to Camp Breadon with the news, then ordered out a scout detail to try to pick up Naquino's trail.

From then until tattoo Dallas spent his time with the officers of the fort. As the trumpet notes were floating away into the distance he wandered out onto the parade. And deep down in his heart he knew that it was with the hope of meeting Blanche.

She was just emerging from Headquarters as he sauntered up.

"Bob!" she cried. "I thought you'd gone off without saying good-by to me."

"You know I wouldn't do that," he said. Once again he felt that deep, abiding comfort in her presence. "But I will be going at dawn, so this will be the last time I'll see you for a while."

"Must you go?" she asked as she moved away from the ramada and took his arm.

"Yes. I must go back to Tucson to check Broderick's next freight shipment to Breadon. After that it's back to the post and more scout duty. How are Mrs. Devore and the children?"

Her face lit up.

"She's a wonderful woman, Bob. She seems to be resting all right. And the children are dears, though they are wild. I finally got them to bed after telling them three stories."

"I'll bet they were about Apaches."

"Of course. What else do camp children have to talk about?"

They were silent then, content to walk through the warm, friendly darkness. Dallas wished that they could go on walking and never stop.

There was magic in the night and magic in Blanche's smile when she turned the pale oval of her face toward him. His eyes lingered on a small tendril of hair which curled off her temple, on the dimple in her chin. And his longing for her told him it was imperative for him to leave her.

They had walked to the end of the parade and back, and had come to the shadows which clung so thickly to the sides of Major Devore's 'dobe before Blanche spoke again.

"Did you ever feel you could reach up toward the sky and wrap your fingers around the stars?" she asked. "They seem so near."

He looked at her closely. "It never hurts to reach for the stars." There was an odd shade of meaning to his words. It puzzled Blanche. It seemed to be something definite and personal.

"What do you mean?" she asked in a low voice.

Her face was tilted toward him in gentle inquiry and her lips were so warm and soft. Suddenly an overpowering impulse came over him that broke down his rigid restraint.

HE TOOK a step toward her, then his arms were around her, and his lips came down against hers with a demanding pressure. For a moment she remained still in his embrace. Then a wild sort of trembling went through her and her lips moved receptively under his. They were caught up in a swift emotional turmoil beyond their control. Then she drew back and his arms fell to his sides.

"Blanche, I—I don't know what to say," he stammered.

She laughed. It was an unsteady laugh

and her voice was unsteady, too. "There's nothing to say, Bob. The Arizona night just got the best of us."

She was thoroughly shaken. Dallas saw that. Her eyes were bright and he suddenly feared that the brightness came from tears.

"I hope you'll forgive me," he said gruffly. "I know that you and Frank— Well, I just shouldn't have done it!"

"It's all right, Bob," she told him, her hand going out to his arm, the slender fingers quivering slightly. "We're good friends. We'll always be. You were kissing me good-by. That's all it was."

She was talking rapidly, almost breathlessly, as if to mask the tumult that beset her. When he didn't reply she chided him gently.

"You're thinking about that girl of yours, aren't you?"

"No, of course not." He was anxious to be away.

"You never did tell me about her, Bob."

"No time now, Blanche," he said quickly. "You've had a busy day. You need sleep. And I've a long day in the saddle ahead of me. Good night, Blanche." He swung on his heel abruptly and walked away.

"Good night, Bob," she called softly. "Good night."

He walked on across the parade very fast. At Lieutenant Wilmer's 'dobe, where he was staying, he paused and looked back. He was a little surprised to see Blanche standing in the lighted doorway. She seemed to be looking toward him, though he couldn't be sure. He forced himself to walk resolutely into the 'dobe.

COMING NEXT MONTH

ZORRO MEETS A WIZARD

A Don Diego Vega Story

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

CHAPTER XI

Near-Encounter

LIGHTS were winking on in the scattered 'dobes and frame houses when Dallas and his detail of four soldiers pulled into Tucson. Serape-clad Mexicans rubbed shoulders with brown-skinned Papago Indians, bearded prospectors or muleskinners.

Riding through the thick dust of Tucson's main street, Dallas saw a battered Concord stage-coach drawn up in front of one of the hotels. Three passengers were emerging.

Two high-wheeled freight wagons were backed up against the loading platform of Roy Broderick's rambling one-story freight office. There was joshing talk as a pair of drovers wrestled barrels into one of the wagons.

Dallas led his men on to a livery stable and dismounted. Leaving instructions with the hostler to grain the horses well, he walked back to the street and nearly collided with another group of soldiers tramping along the planks. They came to an immediate halt, their hands snapping to their forage caps in brisk salutes. Leading the group was Sergeant Jack O'Hara of Troop F.

"What are your men doing in Tucson, Sergeant?" Dallas asked.

"Colonel Raven sent us, sir," O'Hara replied. "He had word that the paymaster would be coming through from Huachuca. We are to escort him back to Breadon."

"Who is in command?"

"Lieutenant Holland, sir."

"Thanks, O'Hara." Dallas turned to the soldiers from his own troop. "Consider the evening your own, but be ready to start for Breadon an hour after dawn."

They saluted and quickly joined the cavalrymen from Troop F. Dallas swung into one of the hotels, got a room, and went upstairs to wash and shave. When he came down he went across the street to a little Mexican restaurant for supper.

Finished eating, he watched the night

life build up in the town. Most of the Indians had disappeared to their little hovels or camps on the outskirts. Mexicans wandered in and out of the *cantinas* and there was more than the usual number of desert-hardened white men in the streets. Dallas wondered about that. They couldn't all be working for the freighting outfits. There were only two freighting companies besides Broderick's, and neither was a serious threat to the big man's extensive business.

Dallas finally sauntered over to the loading platform where the drovers were working on another wagon. As he approached, the door of the office opened and Shorty Russell stepped out.

"Well, what do you want?" the tough little man demanded.

Immediately the memory of that brief scuffle in his own 'dobe burned through Dallas' mind. He wondered if he would ever learn the identity of the intruder. He would have wagered a month's pay it had been Russell.

"Where's Broderick?" he demanded.

"In the Arizona Star playing poker," Russell told him, and added with sly malice, "With a friend of yours."

The subtle intonation told Dallas clearly that he would find Frank Holland with Broderick. He leaped down from the platform. Russell's high windy voice arrested him.

"I suppose you're here to check the freight shipment?"

Dallas glanced up at the little man who leaned toward him, knotted fists resting on his hips. He felt an urge to grab Russell and rough him around.

"You guessed it, friend," he said curtly and swung away.

He went on toward the Arizona Star, a half-dozen doors away. It was a big place with wide swinging doors. The noisy clangor of men's voices, the clink of glasses against bottles, the smell of whisky and warm beer greeted him as he pushed into the smoky interior.

More Mexicans mingled with hard-looking muleskinners, drovers, and range drifters that hugged the bar. They were a rough lot and regarded Dallas without friendliness. He took a deliberate look around the *cantina* before throwing a query at one of the bartenders.

"Is Roy Broderick here?"

THE bartender jerked a thumb toward a closed door at the rear. Dallas moved on, threading his way past the tables. He came to the door, and walked in without knocking.

Three men at the round, drink-stained table twisted around in their chairs. There was a pile of chips and money in front of Broderick. The cigar in the corner of his mouth tilted upward and a scowl flitted across his beefy countenance. He said nothing, merely stared across the table at Dallas. The third man, a slender, dark-haired individual, fiddled nervously with his cards.

Dallas noticed the high color in Holland's face, the tight line of his mouth, the hard way he gripped his cards, and knew his fellow officer was losing.

"I want to see you, Roy," Dallas said.

The freight owner's small, dark eyes remained hard upon the young lieutenant's face.

"You're seeing me."

The hostility was unmistakable, in both Broderick and Holland.

"About that freight your drovers are loading," Dallas said.

Broderick riffled the cards in his hand. "Sit in a while."

"No, thanks." Dallas looked directly at Holland. "Thought you were out of cash, Frank."

Holland bristled. "Better think again," he said.

"Maybe Frank's credit is good with me," Broderick put in.

Dallas wondered how much Holland had lost. He was notoriously unlucky at cards. He seemed angry at Broderick's remark.

"Come on, Roy," Dallas said. "Unless you want me to check the stuff with Russell. You'll be back in the game in twenty minutes."

He was surprised that neither Broderick nor Holland had asked about Blanche or the affair at Edson's ranch, since the news had already been circulated about Tucson.

"If you're worried about Blanche, Frank," he said, "you can rest easy. She came through that ruckus with Naquino in fine style."

"I heard all about it," Holland said flatly. "I hope you've got enough of Apaches now." His temper rose. "It's just your pure dumb luck that you got through, and

that Blanche is alive. Those are your friends—the Apaches who killed Edson and four of your own troop. And you can guess what would have happened to Blanche if they'd got their filthy hands on her."

Holland stood up, leaned forward. His clenched hands stirred the low pile of chips in front of him as he rested his weight on them.

"And yet," he went on savagely, "you're so accursed blind you try to talk Colonel Raven into believing that the Apaches want peace with the whites! All they want is our blood, and it's time you got around to seeing that. I boil every time I think of what might have happened to Blanche—and all because of Indian lovers like you."

Knots of muscle rippled along Dallas' jaw. There was a quiet deadliness about him at this moment and every man at the card table sensed the angry storm seething behind the hard restraint he put upon himself.

"Frank, I want you to remember this," he said. "I went through my own particular brand of perdition getting Blanche out of that ruckus. It was mighty close. But, bad as it was, I still feel the same way about the Apaches. There are good Apaches and bad. Naquino's renegades must be wiped out. The others—like Notah's friendly Aravaipas—are willing to get along with us whites if they're given half a chance. And if you ask Blanche you'll learn that she feels exactly as I do."

Holland's features darkened and jealousy added its own vicious prod to the rage already simmering inside him.

"You seem to know a lot about Blanche—and how she feels. Don't forget what I told you before you left Breadon a few days ago."

Holland started around the table, on the verge of a break. And Dallas, waiting stolidly, suddenly straightened. A cold, hard smile curved his mouth and he set himself for violence with a pleasurable anticipation. They had long been drifting toward the blow-off point. And if the moment had now arrived he was ready for it.

BUT Broderick jumped between them. "Cut it you fools!" he said. He pushed against Holland's chest, jostling him against the table. "Sit down, Frank." He swung around, then, and tongue-lashed both officers. "If you two are looking to get cashiered you couldn't pick a better way."

The freight owner tossed away his cigar and grabbed Dallas by the arm.

"Come on, we'll look at that freight," he said and steered the lieutenant out of the room.

Dallas was silent during the entire period of his inspection. He examined the four loaded wagons, then went on to a big storage room and checked over supplies still to be shipped to the Army camp.

There were dozens of saddle blankets, several thousand rounds of rifle and sidearms ammunition, barrels of flour and molasses and sugar, tinned fruit, two cases of rifles, some new saddles and other staple items that an army in the field requires.

Dallas closed his memorandum book.

"See that all this stuff reaches Breadon," he said.

Broderick's answer was cold. "That's partly the Army's job," he snapped. "Give me enough soldiers to protect my wagons and you'll get every blanket and bullet that's coming to you. Raven has promised me ten troopers for this shipment. Not half enough men for the job."

"That's more than he can spare and you know it," Dallas came to Raven's defense. "He's only got two troops of cavalry and with scout details in the field at all times the men don't get much chance to rest. They're almost continually in the saddle. Why don't you hire some of those tough-looking gun-hands I saw back in the Arizona Star?"

Broderick knotted his big right hand slowly. He stared at the diamond ring on the fourth finger before lifting his dark eyes to Dallas. Something flickered back in those eyes—something malevolent and evil.

"Suppose you let me run my freighting business," he said, and added maliciously, "and I'll let you run the Army."

"All right," Dallas murmured. "You'd better start by leaving Holland alone. You're not doing him any good letting him play himself into debt at poker."

"I told you his credit was good with me."

"Maybe," said the lieutenant grimly. "Maybe you just like Holland for himself, instead of for the color of his money. But

if you get Holland in trouble and hurt Blanche, you'll be hearing from me."

Broderick's face reddened. Fire flashed in his eyes. His right hand fluttered above the holstered gun on his hip.

"Maybe you'd better say just what you mean."

"You can guess, Broderick."

"And I can tell you I always do as I please," snarled Broderick. "Meanwhile, if you ever find anything crooked about my business you'd better come to me with your gun smoking."

Dallas nodded curtly. "You can count on that."

CHAPTER XII

Noble Experiment

DALLAS found Colonel Raven at his Headquarters desk when he arrived at Camp Breadon two days later. The commandant got to his feet and extended a bronzed hand toward the lieutenant.

"Dallas," he said, "I don't need to tell you how thankful I am that you saw Blanche safely to Fort Huachuca. But I gather you had a hard time of it."

Dallas nodded somberly and, at Raven's request, gave a detailed account of his experiences.

"The fault is mine," Raven stated, when Dallas had finished. "I should never have permitted Blanche to go, with Naquino's band raising hob all over Southern Arizona. It was asking for trouble."

"Let her stay at Huachuca until the Apaches have quieted down," Dallas suggested.

"I've already sent her instructions by courier not to make any attempt to return until I give the word."

Raven dropped into his chair and mechanically thumbed through some papers on the desk. Suddenly he glanced up at Dallas.

"Shonten pulled out of the Aravaipa camp two nights ago with forty braves," he said gravely.

Dallas' eyes narrowed in troubled thought.

"Did you try to bring them back?"

"Waters took out a detail a few hours after they'd gone, but lost the trail completely near Lemon Mountain in the Pinals."

"That makes our position at Breadon a precarious one."

Raven nodded grimly. "Definitely. Two troops of cavalry won't be nearly enough to hold off Naquino's Tontos if Shonten decides to join forces with him."

"What does Notah say?" Dallas asked.

"He says Shonten and his young men are fools. They will find only trouble and death in the Pinals."

"But before the Army catches up with them they can do plenty of damage."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Raven admitted. "Shonten is a warrior, looking for the glory of battle. It might bring him enough power to supplant Notah as chief. That's what he's after."

Raven's blunt fingers drummed on the desk. He seemed to be considering something. At last he slammed his fist down and stood up.

"I'm going to take your suggestion about putting the Apaches to work," he declared. "Notah thinks one of the reasons why Shonten was able to get his way was that too many of the young men are idle. Riding with Shonten, raiding and killing and outwitting the Army, offers thrills and excitement. Maybe this is all too late, but Notah tells me that not all of the young men of his tribe joined Shonten. A few are still not sure what they want to do. Maybe you can swing them back to Notah. You've got a free hand."

A look of pleasure came into Dallas' rugged, strong-boned face.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I'm happy to have the opportunity to put my ideas into effect. I'll do my best to make them work."

"I know you will." Raven walked toward the door of the 'dobe. "Good luck. You're going to need it."

Dallas remembered, then, the freight memorandum he was carrying. He dug it out of his pocket and handed it to Raven.

"I checked every item of freight that Broderick will be sending to Breadon this week. This is the complete list."

Raven examined the figures, then passed the memorandum back to Dallas.

"You hold on to it and see that Nixon gets all of it. I'm taking you off scout details until you can get those Aravaipas lined up. And from now on, we'll keep a more careful check of all equipment used by the scout details. If there is any waste or crookedness going on I want it stopped. I'll see that Holland and Waters get similar orders."

Dallas saluted and stepped out into the bright sunlight. Soldiers began filing out of the barracks as the bugles sounded drill call.

In five minutes they were all lined up along the parade, facing Headquarters and Officers' Row. In the absence of Holland, Lieutenant Waters took over F Troop while Dallas stood at attention and ran the men of Troop D through their paces.

Dallas' cool, crisp voice rang across the parade as he gave the orders and the column wheeled and marched before him. He kept them at it for twenty minutes. Then, seeing how the sun was punishing them, he dismissed them. Waters dismissed F Troop and the soldiers dragged themselves and their shining equipment back to barracks. . . .

THE next morning, after fatigue call, Dallas took Jim Bell and rode off with him to the Aravaipa camp. Naked Apache children wandered curiously out of the tents and jacals as the two white men approached. The camp dogs set up a raucous barking, and the smell of cooking was in the hot, dry air.

They went straight to the large brush jacal where Notah lived. An aged squaw appeared in the opening, said, "Nantan" and gestured for Dallas and Bell to go inside.

The Aravaipa chief was squatting on a blanket, puffing at a pipe. He indicated other blankets and Dallas and the scout sat cross-legged upon them.

After ten minutes had been spent in the usual conversational preliminaries, Dallas instructed Bell to tell Notah how sorry he was to learn that Shonten had gone away. Bell also stated, at Dallas' request, that the Army had a plan which he hoped would bring prosperity to the Aravaipas.

"It is well," replied Notah. "My young men become troublesome when they are idle. I listen with big ears to this plan Nantan speaks about."

First, Dallas suggested that Notah should appoint a half-dozen men to serve as policemen. Their job would involve keeping law and order among the braves and arresting those found committing crimes. There should also be an Apache court presided over by Notah.

The idea met with Notah's approval and Dallas pointed out that his Indian police ought to be particularly effective in curbing the use of *tiswin* among the younger braves.

The lieutenant then went on to offer forty cents a day to all able-bodied Aravaipas who were willing to work in the fields, cutting hay and toting it to the Army post. Twenty Indians, at least, would be needed. Others could be put to work building a new guardhouse and corral at the post. Wages would be paid in Army scrip, exchangeable for food or other merchandise at the sutler's store.

When Bell had finished translating, the aged Indian nodded his head in somber approval and spoke briefly.

"He says Nantan's suggestions are wise and good," Bell told Dallas. "By the next sun he will have twenty young men in the hay fields."

The Indian rose to signal the end of the discussion and Dallas and the scout parted the smelly deerskin hide that covered the entrance to the wikiup and passed outside. . . .

If Dallas expected Notah's tribesmen to jump at the opportunity presented them, he was doomed to disappointment. He was out in the hay fields early the next morning and was surprised to see Notah waiting for him, with only six Indians.

Notah explained through Bell that his warriors had grown used to idleness and not many of them cared to work. Besides, some of them did not believe they would be paid.

"You can assure them they'll receive their scrip at the end of the week," Dallas stated. "The Army at Camp Breadon will keep its promise."

Notah shrugged and said he could do nothing more at the moment. Dallas decided not to press the issue and detailed Sergeant Modoc to superintend the day's work. The Aravaipas had brought along their native hunting knives to cut the hay. Modoc supplied them with stout twine with which to bind it up into bales which

they were to carry on their backs to the camp barns and mangers.

Late that afternoon Frank Holland pulled into the post with his detail and the Army paymaster. And just before dark Broderick's caravan of freight wagons arrived in front of the sutler's store. Dallas was on hand to check all the goods in, and he satisfied himself that the shipment was complete.

During the next three days the same six Indians appeared each morning to labor in the hay fields. They worked industriously enough but the amount of hay they gathered was pitifully small compared to the posts' needs. Raven came out in the middle of the afternoon of the third day and watched the Aravaipas.

"Looks like your plan isn't turning out so well," he said. "Six men out of a hundred able-bodied Aravaipas isn't much of a showing.

FRANK HOLLAND had come up to watch, too. He grinned with malicious pleasure.

"These won't last, either," he predicted. "Apache swould rather steal and kill than work. Better have the farrier sergeant count Troop D's horses every night."

"I'll vouch for the horses," Dallas snapped.

"Reckon we'll have to forget about the new guardhouse," the commandant murmured.

But Dallas would not admit he was licked.

"Wait until next week, sir," he said to Raven with a stubborn conviction. "Things may be different, then."

"I'll bet on that," broke in Holland with an unpleasant laugh.

That night some of the Aravaipas sneaked some *tiswin* into the Indian camp. They became boisterous and ugly. In trying to break up the disturbance, one of Notah's Indian policemen was shot and one of the celebrants was killed.

This almost prompted Colonel Raven to abandon Dallas' entire project and to detail a dozen soldiers for permanent guard duty at the camp. But Dallas argued eloquently to let Notah and his police work it out themselves.

Saturday came and the six Indians who had worked all week in the hay fields were paid off in scrip. They immediately rushed off to the sutler's store to purchase food and fancy gewgaws.

On Monday, came the break Dallas had been anticipating. Fifteen Aravaipas showed up, ready to work in the hay fields. The Aravaipas had waited to see if their tribesmen would be paid, according to the Nantan's promise.

At the beginning of the next week, Dallas had thirty more braves making adobe bricks for a new guardhouse. And they soon learned how to make the sun-dried bricks under the guidance of Corporal Lavelle.

Meanwhile six men, working under Sergeant Modoc, pitched in to help some of Notah's older Indians dig irrigation ditches to divert some of the water from the Santa Cruz River to the Indian farms. Barley, wheat and vegetables were planted and Dallas arranged with Notah to purchase a portion of each crop at a price that would give the tribe a reasonable profit and stil save the Army money.

Two more weeks went by. In that time Dallas, Holland and Waters all took their turns leading scout details into the Pinals and Maricopas in search of Naquino or Shonten. Holland had a brush with a small bunch of renegade Tontos near Kellogg Mountain, but the Tontos got away, leaving three dead warriors behind them.

At the Aravaipa camp Notah's native police surprised a half-dozen warriors making *tiswin* in the hills, captured them and destroyed all the fresh brew they could find. The culprits were placed in a makeshift guardhouse at the camp, and life went on as before.

CHAPTER XIII

Brush in the Line Cabin

THE night following the *tiswin* party, Dallas checked Troop D's hay supplies in the barn, then wandered over to the commissary building. The building was dark and the door was locked so he turned away.

The rattle and creak of wheels pulled him to a halt. He stared

into the darkness. Then far across the quadrangle he saw the sprinkling cart rumble around the side of the sutler's store. Water hissed in a steaming spray from beneath the wagon, settling the thick dust of the parade.

An idle question leaped into his mind. Why had the sprinkling cart come around the side of the sutler's store? There was no reason for it to have been there. Trees and brush grew all around the store, providing one of the few spots of real shade in the daytime.

Slowly a dark suspicion built up within him. He let the cart rumble past before crossing over to the sutler's store.

It was almost time for the bugles to blow tattoo. Already lights were winking out along Officers' Row. There was a light in the sutler's store. A few soldiers stood at the bar.

Dallas ducked around the side of the building. The large rear storeroom was dark. At the back of the structure, under the trees, the gloom was intense. He lit a match, cupped the light toward the ground and saw the steel tire marks of the sprinkling cart.

Boot prints littered the dust. A sharp, ridged mark near the rear door was straight and deep as if it had been made by the edge of a box. The match winked out. Dallas felt his boot scuff against a loose piece of wood, long and rectangular, with a fresh nail protruding from one end.

The fact that the wood was smooth and not weather-marked told Dallas that it had just recently been left there. It was the sort of lumber used for packing cans of food. But it also might have come from a case of rifle shells. He was sure of it when he found a new, unfired cartridge wedged up against the wall of the store.

More than two weeks had passed since the last shipment of supplies had arrived from Tucson. If one of the shell cases had broken open at that time, the wood from the case should have become weather-beaten.

Dallas hurried behind Officers' Row and the mess hall until he reached the river. The hour call was going the rounds from one sentry to another as he stopped in the brush about fifty yards away from the sprinkling cart. He saw the soldier posted at No. 10 stride to the end of his post.

The sentry glanced idly at the cart and the crouching figure of Trooper Reynolds of Troop F who had run a length of hose from the cart and attached it to the portable pump he now thrust into the stream.

After a moment the sentry walked back along the river bank. Dallas slid through the bushes, moving as silently as an Indian, until he reached the far side of the cart.

He did not want to risk lighting another match now so he ran his hands in exploratory fashion over the metal water tank. There was nothing unusual about the big metal cylinder, no sign of a false section. Dallas ducked under the cart. He ran into an iron bracket that dug a piece of flesh out of his shoulder.

There were other brackets attached to the tank at regular intervals, all cleverly concealed by two wooden flash boards that extended down below the tank, on a level with the wheel hubs. Dallas could think of no legitimate purpose for the brackets. Both the portable pump and the hose were carried in a box under the driver's seat.

The trooper finished pumping water into the tank and came back to the cart. Dallas retreated to the brush and waited until the cart had been driven away.

It occurred to Dallas that there was no set time for the cart to be used. The driving was done by Reynolds of F Troop, or Carlin of D Troop. Apparently they ran the cart whenever they thought it necessary or when other duties had prevented them from wetting down the post grounds during the day.

Dallas moved down to the river's edge. The sentry at No. 10 post walked within fifty feet of the lieutenant without seeing him, then turned and strode back again. Dallas risked a match and examined the ground along the bank.

ALMOST at once he found the prints of two shod horses. One set of prints was deep, the other light. Obviously the second animal was a led horse. Yet, going away, the prints were equally deep.

That could mean only one thing. Some rider had forded the river at an obscure point to escape detection by the sentries and had been met by someone from the camp. There were sharp indentations in the soft damp ground of the river bank showing where heavy boxes had been set down.

Positive now that he had stumbled upon a bold attempt to steal Army supplies, Dallas hurried to the corrals. He roped a strong black gelding and flung the first saddle he could find on the animal's back. Then he vaulted into the hull and rode back to the river's edge.

No. 10 challenged, but passed the lieutenant on when he had identified himself. Dallas followed the trail of the two horses to a shallow section of the river, splashed through the stream and climbed out on the far bank.

Dismounting, he struck another match, and finally picked up the sign again as it wandered straight north toward the Pinals. As he rode, his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness and he was able to follow the trail by the meager light of the stars.

Two miles of steady riding convinced him that the two horsemen must be heading for Walt Corbett's cattle ranch or one of the cowman's line shacks. Corbett was one of three ranchers operating within a forty-mile radius of Camp Breadon.

Dallas knew that Corbett, like the other ranchers, was inclined to resent the Army's presence, and to discount its capacity for keeping order. The ranchers claimed they could handle the Apaches in their own way. Yet whenever there was trouble it was Corbett and his friends who howled the loudest for protection. Ferriss and Edson, whose ranches were situated closed to Tucson, were among the few cattle owners who were friendly with the men and officers of Camp Breadon.

Dallas found the trail pitching downward into a brush-rimmed gully that finally splayed out into a broad plain. Cactus and mesquite covered the shaly ground with here and there a sparse patch of sun-cured forage grass. Then Dallas sighted one of Corbett's line cabins. A dim yellow light glimmered from one of the small windows. Far-off, in the brush, a horse whinnied.

Dalas tested the revolver in his holster and kicked the black into a fast canter. He angled into a thin line of trees, to come up on the cabin from the side. He didn't see any horses.

When he was fifty yards away he jumped from saddle and ground-tied the gelding. Then he moved rapidly across the open space until he gained the cabin wall.

Flattened there, he heard a murmur of voices inside. He could not tell how many were talking. But recklessly he pushed forward.

Then the light went out. Boots tramped along the flor. Dallas jerked out his gun and leaped toward the door as someone flung it open. A rusty hinge squeaked and a man's shape appeared.

"Halt! Throw up your hands!" Dallas ordered.

But the man kept coming. He drove against Dallas, who felt a stab of pain as a heavy weight slammed against his wrist. He dropped the revolver. The man tried to rush past, but Dallas threw himself in the way and knocked him backward into the shack.

There was the thudding impact of bodies colliding. Somewhere behind the first man another man cursed in pain. Then all three were locked in a threshing riotous tangle of arms and legs. A knee slammed upward into Dallas' stomach and a numbing blow struck him behind the ear.

He lashed out with his own right fist, felt his knuckles smack a face, and struck again. One of his assailants was trapped beneath him. He pounded the man hard with both fists until the other one pounced on his back, locked a pair of muscular arms around his neck and dragged him backward.

"Over here!—over here!" he called in a muffled voice to his unseen companion.

DALLAS was strangling as he fought to loosen the grip of those strong arms. He heard the scuff of boots along the earth floor of the shack and drew up his legs. The first man leaped upon him, trying to pin him down. But Dallas kicked up and outward with both feet and sent the man spinning away.

At the same instant he flung up a hand and struck a backhand blow. The punch landed on the other's man's nose. The arms around Dallas' throat loosened and he wrenched free.

He rose quickly, sensing that the man behind him was up and racing toward the door. He stumbled through the blackness in pursuit. Halfway to the door he collided with the second man. He tried to catch himself but not in time. He swung a late punch at the spot where he thought the man's face should be. But the blow slid

along the fellow's shoulder and he took a vicious hook to the jaw that spun him around and sent him skidding against a table.

Dallas' feet slid out from under him. The back of his head struck the table edge as he went down and then a wave of blackness, shot through with blinding red sparks, descended upon him. . . .

Unconsciousness was a deep, dark pit, limitless and overwhelming. Even when the veil of oblivion began to lift, Dallas seemed to keep sliding backward into an empty road where the signposts were marked with pain. For a time his fight to stave off that downward sliding was futile. At last he knew that he was winning when he became aware of the increased pain at the base of his skull.

He opened his eyes upon complete darkness. He lay flat on his back in the line shack. There was an egg-shaped lump on his head and the skin had been broken by the edge of the table. He sat up, and immediately had to battle a new wave of dizziness. But the spasm passed and he got slowly to his feet.

Reeling to the door, he peered outside. The night was black except for the faint, far-off illumination of the stars. There was no sound. His two assailants had fled.

He turned back inside, struck a match. A bull's-eye lantern hung from a peg on the wall. Dallas took it down and lit the wick. By its light he examined the crude room. It was furnished with the usual accoutrements of a line shack. A pair of wall bunks, a rough table and a few chairs, a small wood stove, and a shelf with some tin plates and a few pots and pans.

A heavy wooden slat, carelessly tossed behind the stove, drew his attention. One look told Dallas that the board had been ripped off the top of a case of ammunition. The words, "Camp Breadon," had been painted on the slat. Below the camp name appeared the top portion of three letters "AMM."

If he needed any further proof that Corbett's ranch was a base of operations in a scheme to loot the Army post's supplies, this was it. Grimly he strode to the door. At the threshold he tramped on something round and hard. He stooped down to retrieve it.

It was a dusty brass button from a cavalryman's tunic!

He thrust it into his pocket, sure now that one of the men he sought came from Breadon.

Whatever had been stolen from the sutler's store—and he was certain that one of the items was a box of ammunition—had been taken away while he lay unconscious.

He wanted those men badly and he wanted to recover the stolen supplies. But there wasn't much time in which to act. He had to gamble where the material had been cached. And his guess was Corbett's ranch.

He decided to ride back to Breadon for a detail, then proceed to Corbett's outfit and conduct a thorough search. He realized the position in which he would be placing the Army if the search brought no results, yet the risk would have to be assumed.

Close to the door he found his revolver, which had been knocked from his hand. It was undamaged so he returned it to his holster and hurried back to the gelding in the brush.

[Turn page]

196 PAGES OF SIX-GUN THRILLS

Featuring Three Outstanding Western Novels by Famous Writers —
CLEAR THE TRAIL, an Epic of the Frontier by Charles Alden Seltzer—BULLETS for BUCKAROOS, an Exciting Three Mesquiteers Yarn, by William Colt MacDonald —
and THE STRONG SHALL HOLD, an Action Saga of the Rangeland by Bruce Douglas

IN THE GALA FEBRUARY ISSUE OF

TRIPLE WESTERN

NOW ON SALE—ONLY 25c PER COPY AT ALL STANDS!

CHAPTER XIV

Face to Face

JUST as Dallas hit the far end of the quadrangle, a trumpet was blowing assembly. He drew in the black with a puzzled frown. Lights bloomed all over the parade. Several troopers trotted in from the corrals, leading saddled horses. Soldiers called to one another through the shadows before Colonel Raven, limping out from Headquarters, shouted for order.

"All right, Mr. Holland! You don't need the whole post to ride to Corbett's ranch. Take a detail of ten men and see what you can find. But heaven help you if you're wrong about those stolen cases. Corbett will bring General Crook down on my neck."

Cold shock held Dallas rigidly still as he heard the commandant. He saw Holland turn and regard the large group of soldiers lined up behind him. He began to name off ten men to make up the detail. Through the darkness a few more soldiers came running from the barracks. Dallas halted one of them.

"What's up?"

The soldier skidded to a halt and saluted.

"Oh, it's you, sir," he said. "Didn't you hear? Lieutenant Holland was out riding beyond the camp and he saw two men on horseback proceeding away from camp. They acted suspicious, so he followed them. They rode right to one of Walt Corbett's line shacks. They seemed to be carrying a couple of wooden cases on their saddles.

"When the lieutenant reached the shack the two men must have heard him because they doused the light. He went on, however, challenged them and was immediately attacked in the darkness. He was knocked out. When he came to they were gone, but he is sure he will find one of the men at Corbett's main ranch. The other, he thinks, was an Army man from Breadon."

This rocked Dallas like the blow of a fist. He knew now that that button belonged to Frank Holland! Somehow Holland had been aware that the man who had followed him to the line shack was Dallas. Desperate at being caught stealing post property, Holland had played a bold hand. And with luck he might carry it off!

Dallas saw how neatly Holland had trapped him, placed him on the defensive. Holland had told a story that was true, except for the roles played by the leading actors in the grim drama.

Holland had dismissed all the men of Troops D and F except those selected to ride in the detail, and he had just given the order to mount, when Raven called to him.

"You're sure about one of the men being a soldier?"

Holland twisted around in the saddle.

"Almost positive, sir," he replied. "One of the men was wearing what felt like a cavalryman's tunic. But there is one sure way of proving it."

"And what's that?" barked Raven.

"The fight was pretty nasty while it lasted," said Holland. "You may have noticed the bruises on my face. Well, I'm sure that other man is also carrying the marks of that fight."

Raven came forward, leaning heavily on his cane. His face was haggard in the glare of a lantern held by a trooper. He spoke in a savagely angry voice to the trooper.

"Rout out those trumpeters! Tell them to blow assembly and to keep blowing it until every mother's son is lined up here on the parade for me to look at." To Holland, he added, "All right, get along with your detail." Holland saluted.

Deep in the shadows of the trees Dallas rubbed the fingers of one hand over his face. There was a cut on one cheek. A lump was beginning to form along the tip of his chin. He wondered if his face was dirty.

Holland's strident voice rang out:

"Forward!"

Saddles creaked and bit chains rattled as the detail moved out toward the desert.

Dallas pulled the black far into the trees, then rode rapidly off behind the commissary building until he reached the barracks. He dismounted and stumbled

over to the washing trough. Ducking his head under the water, he scrubbed his face as well as he could in the darkness, dried himself with a towel he found hanging from the limb of a tree and jumped into the saddle again.

FORAGE cap pulled low to hide his features, he rode across the parade, coming up beside Colonel Raven. The commandant, busily watching the men of Troops D and F form before him, whirled at Dallas' approach.

"Sir, with your permission I'd like to accompany Lieutenant Holland's detail to Corbett's ranch," Dallas said quickly.

Raven glanced at him sharply. Dallas' heart skipped a beat, wondering if the commandant could distinguish his features clearly in the half-gloom. And he asked himself another disturbing question: Had Raven noticed his absence from the post when Holland had brought in the alarm?

"No need for you to go along," Raven said shortly. "Eleven men are enough." He turned back toward the parade.

Something akin to panic gripped Dallas, and he risked Raven's ire by pressing his request. "I was hoping for a change from post routine," he said. "Maybe a little action."

Raven snorted in annoyance. "Go ahead then. Clear out of here and let me alone."

Dallas didn't wait. He whirled his horse around and sped off toward the Santa Cruz. Crossing at the ford, he took off on a straight line for the Corbett ranch.

He made no attempt to overtake Holland's detail, content to remain behind them—for a good reason. But when he knew only a few miles separated him from the ranch, he gave the black its head and settled down to pursuit.

Just one mile from the ranch he overhauled the detail. Long before he reached them he saw how Holland halted his men, deployed them to left and right of the beaten trail and waited for Dallas to come up.

The tense alertness that had gripped the troopers left them as soon as they recognized Dallas. Guns were thrust back into holsters, carbines rammed into saddle scabbards.

Holland spurred his cavalry mount forward and met Dallas fifty yards away from the halted detail.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, anger and suspicion in his voice.

Dallas grinned. "Just thought I'd come along to be in on the fun."

"I'm taking you back to the post," Holland snapped and dropped his hand to his revolver.

But Dallas' hand was already on his own gun and his voice snapped back at Holland like a whip.

"You're wrong, Frank. We're going on, you and I, and see this little business through."

They faced each other a few feet apart, with the threat of violence between them like a breath of hot air.

"You played it mighty slick, Frank," Dallas went on in a low voice, anger throbbing in every word. "You must be pretty deeply in debt."

"What are you talking about?" Holland growled.

Dallas dug in his pocket for a match and scratched it on the saddle horn. The leaping flare of light showed him Holland's slightly soiled tunic. There was a button missing.

"I've got the button you lost tonight at Corbett's line shack."

A sickly pallor spread over Holland's face. For one moment fear crawled in his eyes. It was like seeing Holland naked.

Holland's jaw then stiffened and an ugly, triumphant smile twisted his lips.

"That's evidence against you, Dallas," he said. "Whose story do you think Raven will believe?" He peered closely at Dallas as the match sputtered out. "Are those bruises on your face?" He laughed, answering his own question. "Why, sure. And they'll wash you right out of the Army!"

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?" Dallas queried hotly.

Holland hesitated briefly, then said: "If you want it straight—yes. Too bad Blanche isn't here to see you disgraced."

Dallas was suddenly filled with contempt for this man who wore the same Army blue that he wore.

"I used to think you had a decent streak in you, Frank. I see now that was all wrong." He paused and added, "As for Blanche, ask yourself if she'd believe that story about me you're planning to tell Raven."

HE TURNED his horse and rode on toward the detail. He heard the rasping intake of Holland's breath and knew that uncontrollable jealousy was gripping him.

The troopers' low-voiced discussion of the two officers broke off at Dallas' approach. He pretended not to notice the sudden silence or their quizzical appraisal. Then Holland rode up, totally ignoring Dallas, and signaled for the detail to proceed.

Lights were gleaming in the 'dobe ranchhouse and in the log bunkhouse when they clattered into the yard of the Corbett outfit. The front door opened and Walt Corbett, a short, bald-headed man, stepped out and flattened himself against the house wall.

"Who's there? Sing out!"

"Holland and detail from Breadon!" Holland answered.

Corbett moved out of the shadows and came down the steps. Three men sauntered out of the bunkhouse, arms swinging near their holstered guns.

"What are you fellows doing here this time of night?" Corbett demanded, his voice neither friendly nor unfriendly. His thick chest stretched the torn plaid shirt he wore and a stubble of reddish beard covered his cheeks. His sharp glance touched one soldier after another.

"A couple of cases of bullets were stolen from the sutler's store at the post." Holland was blunt and, Dallas thought ironically, precisely accurate in his statement of what was missing. "I trailed the stuff to one of your line shacks and ran into a ruckus with two men in the dark inside the shack. They knocked me out. When I came to they and the stuff were gone. I figure I'll find it here."

Corbett took a threatening step toward Holland.

"That's a lie!" he growled. "Nobody from here was anywhere near Breadon tonight. This is just an excuse for the Army to come snooping around."

His three punchers halted beside him. They spread out a little, eyes wary and dangerous as they confronted the troopers.

Ed Tully, Corbett's ramrod, stood on wide-spread legs, his thumbs hooked in his gun-belt. He was a dark, dour man, thick-lipped and surly. His jaw was blunt and heavy, his crooked teeth were yellow from tobacco stain and neglect. His manner was bold and defiant, yet each time he glanced at Holland a queer expression was in his eyes.

"Turn around and go back where you came from," ordered Corbett, his balled hands resting on his hips, while fury washed steadily and unremittingly through his wire-taut frame.

"Or we'll run you off, pronto," Tully added savagely.

Holland leaned forward and looked directly at Corbett.

"We're staying until we've searched this place," he stated.

"The devil you will!" growled Corbett and dug for his gun.

But Holland's revolver was already in his fist, the long barrel pointed at the rancher's chest. On either side of him the troopers brought out their side arms, covering the four cowmen.

"Drop those guns!" ordered Holland. "You haven't got a chance."

The silence in the yard had a brittle quality. No one moved. Tully's hand, hovering directly above his Colt, seemed paralyzed. Beside him the other two cowboys seemed to be awaiting some move from him.

Then the open threat of those soldier guns won out. With dark blood congesting his face, Tully let his gun drop to the ground. The two punchers followed his example.

Corbett scowled. "Curse it, Tully, why didn't you drill him?" But he, too, drew his gun from holster and let it slide to the ground. He added angrily to Holland, "If I had my whole crew here you wouldn't be getting away with this. But go ahead. I'll have your stripes for this night's work."

Holland, coldly defiant, shot a swift question at the puncher beside Corbett's ramrod.

"What time did Tully ride back to the ranch tonight?"

"Why just a little while—" the puncher started to answer, clapped a hand across his mouth.

Tully deliberately struck the man with a short, jabbing punch that knocked him back against the veranda.

"You fool! Keep your mouth shut!" he snarled.

CHAPTER XV

The Doublecrosser

ED TULLY turned slowly back to Holland and Dallas felt an unseen tension grow between the two men. The ramrod's jaw was clear and blunt.

"I hope you know what you're doing," he said to Holland.

Holland grinned, without humor.

"You'll see, Ed," he answered, then he swung his attention to Corbett. "It's obvious from what one of your crew started to say that Tully was out riding tonight. And if you want to know where, take a look at his face. He's been fighting with me—out at your line shack."

Dallas' lips tightened as he realized that Tully was Holland's partner, and that Holland was deliberately betraying him to save his own skin.

Tully whirled around in anger. The maneuver brought his face partly into the light from the ranchhouse. There was a blue-black bruise beneath his right eye and a reddish swelling high up on one temple.

"Frank," he said in a voice that was low and dangerous, "don't carry this too far." Then he added for Corbett's benefit, "I got this tonight when I was thrown from my horse while chousin' a few steers out of the brakes."

Corbett and the punchers looked bewildered. Only three men there—Dallas, Tully and Holland himself—understood what was going on.

"Move along in front of us," Holland ordered the ranch crew. "We'll search the barn first."

The soldiers dismounted. One trooper was ordered to stay with the horses. Then, guns fisted, they shepherded Corbett and his punchers toward the barn. One of the soldiers lit a storm lantern and others began shifting riding gear, shovels and other farm implements. Two more climbed to the loft with pitchforks and started hunting through the hay.

Before long a shout came from above and a trooper leaned over the edge of the loft.

"There are two cases of short arms ammunition up here!" he told Holland. "Both marked for Camp Breadon."

"All right," said Holland. "Bring them down." He swung around at Corbett's involuntary gasp of surprise. "You still hanker to get my stripes, Walt?"

"Tully, you sneaking sidewinder!" rasped Corbett. "If you've been selling bullets to the Apaches—"

"That's what's been going on, Walt," broke in Holland. "And Army carbines, too, and blankets."

With a fierce cry of rage, Tully lunged at Holland.

"You dirty doublecrosser!"

A sudden on-the-spot plan sent Dallas hurtling between them. He met Tully's wild rush with charging shoulders. He took a blow under the eye, another alongside the jaw before he landed with a short hook to the jaw.

Tully was staggered momentarily. But he came on again, trying to reach Holland. He looped a left to Dallas' head, then slid to the side. Dallas hooked a left under the heart and drove him to the floor of the barn with a jolting right that caught the tip of the chin.

Before Tully could scramble to his feet three troopers were upon him, wrestling him into submission. Holland swung angrily toward Dallas.

"There was no need for you to interfere. I could have handled him myself."

The soldiers close to the two officers looked at Holland, surprised at his resentment. And their surprise increased when Dallas said with a broad, good-natured grin:

"What's the matter, Frank? Jealous of my bruises? I think they're a perfect match for your own."

Holland's head jerked around as if it had been pulled by a string. Only then did the import of Dallas' maneuver hit him. He was too angry for words. Dallas was suddenly in the clear. Whatever marks of fighting he bore had been, to all intents and purposes, legitimized by the scuffle with Tully.

And as he moved morosely away, Dallas added in a voice that no one else could discern: "We're all even now, Frank."

CORBETT glared at Tully who was being pulled to his feet by three troopers.

"Frank," the rancher said, "it ain't easy for a man like me to be humble. I never did like the Army. I don't like it now—it ain't kept the Apaches from rustlin' my stock. But you've got to believe I had nothing to do with stealing them cases."

Dallas studied the little cowman. There was a ring of sincerity in his voice that was convincing.

"All right," Holland answered indifferently. "Forget about it."

He turned to watch the troopers drag Tully toward the door. There was malevolence and hate in the ramrod's glance as it settled upon the cavalry lieutenant.

"Some day I'll kill you, Frank," he said.

If the soldiers were a little puzzled by the depth of the ranch foreman's antagonism it was because they were unaware of the evil interests which had bound Holland and Tully. Holland's face turned gray.

"I don't think you will, Ed, because I'm not finished yet."

Holland directed the group to clear out of the barn and go to the bunkhouse. Once inside the bunkhouse he spoke crisply to three soldiers.

"Tear this place apart. Search it thoroughly."

"Wait a minute, Holland!" protested Corbett. "You've found what you wanted. Why not call it quits?"

"There's something else," said Holland. "Go ahead, men."

Troopers began ripping sheets and blankets off bunks, going through clothing that hung from pegs. Holland, too, joined the search. It was he who pulled a crumpled ball of blue silk cloth out from behind one of the bunks.

"Anyone recognize this?" he demanded of the Corbett crew.

"Looks like one of Tully's fancy shirts," a puncher blurted.

Holland unfolded the material. It was a shirt. But one sleeve was missing. Dallas gave a start, which Holland saw.

"I see you recognize it, Bob," he said, his manner almost genial. He waited for Dallas to pull a blue shirt sleeve from his tunic pocket. "And you're right. That sleeve matches this shirt." He ignored Tully's glittering eyes, watching Corbett's blank, puzzled features. "For your information, Walt, we found a sleeve from a man's blue shirt at Notah's Aravaipa camp the night his camp was raided. The raiders were dressed like Apaches. We might have believed they were Apaches except for this fancy shirt and the marks of a cowboy's high-heeled boots we found in the dust. Any way you look at it, Tully was in on that raid. And friendly Aravaipas were killed that night."

Tully, displaying an amazing amount of strength, broke away from his captors and rushed at Holland. As he ran his hand slid inside his shirt and came out with a hideout gun. He brought it up, but Holland's own weapon crashed, spewed a ruddy streak of flame and Tully fell.

Reflex action squeezed the trigger of his gun. The bullet slammed into the floor and Tully followed it, already dead. Holland glanced at the ramrod, then holstered his smoking revolver.

"That was a good shot, Frank," Dallas told him, and not another man in the room understood his true meaning. . . .

On the return to Camp Breadon, at Dallas' insistence he and Holland rode straight to the sutler's store before reporting to Colonel Raven. The detail had been dismissed at once and the men wandered back to barracks.

The store was in complete darkness, but the door was unlocked. And that was the tip-off on what awaited them. Going back into the living quarters of Nixon and his daughter, Dallas and Holland found evidences of a hasty departure.

The beds had been stripped. Some clothing was strewn on the floor. Everything of a personal nature was gone.

Going on to barracks, they discovered that the trooper who had been driving the sprinkling cart had also disappeared. He had deserted, a quick inspection showed, evidently having made his escape after Raven's call to assembly had lined both troops on the parade.

Three horses were missing from the corral and the sentry at No. 9 post had been slugged with a revolver butt and lay trussed up in the bushes.

DALLAS and Holland released the sentry, dismissed him to the barracks and called another soldier to take his place. Then they hurried to Head-

quarters where the commandant was impatiently waiting in the front room. He had thrown his tunic over his nightshirt, but padded back and forth in his bare feet.

"Well, you gentlemen certainly took your time," he said.

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Holland, "but there was something we had to take care of before we reported."

"And what was that?"

"Nixon and his daughter have left and Trooper Reynolds has deserted."

Raven stopped his pacing and spun around. His ruddy cheeks puffed out and his eyes widened in astonishment.

"You're sure of what you're saying, Mr. Holland? Nixon was here during assembly call."

"He's gone now," Dallas put in. "We just searched his quarters. Everything is gone. And the sentry at Post Number Nine was knocked out, no doubt by the Nixons and Reynolds when they fled."

Raven held up his hand. "Wait a minute. We're getting off the main subject. Let's get back to your ride to Corbett's ranch."

"It all ties in," said Dallas.

"How?" Raven demanded.

"I'd better start from the beginning," said Holland. "We found what we were looking for at Corbett's place. Two cases of short arms ammunition. They were under the hay in the barn loft."

"Then where is Corbett? Why didn't you bring him in?"

Holland swallowed a little nervously. "There was no proof that he was involved."

"Who was then?"

"Ed Tully. He was one of the men I fought in the line shack."

For the first time Raven glanced at Dallas' face, noting the discolorations.

"Where did you get banged up?"

"Fighting Tully. He tried to charge Holland."

Again Raven looked puzzled and displeased.

"And where is Tully?"

"He's dead."

Before Raven could frame another question Holland cut in with a full explanation. Raven listened with a growing impatience.

"Too bad you killed him," he said. "If he was in that raid on the Aravaipas he might have been able to give some information about his accomplices. What about Corbett?" He spoke to Dallas. "What do you think?"

"I'd suggest a close watch be kept on his ranch and on his men," Dallas told him. "He looked genuinely surprised when we found those ammunition cases at the ranch. Tully was playing his own game."

"What about that other man in the line shack?" Raven persisted doggedly. He stared intently at Holland, who was sweating profusely. "You said you thought he was an Army man. But I went through the rolls after the detail left and not a man bore the marks of a fight."

Holland hesitated. His eyes kept swinging to Dallas as if he feared his fellow officer would bare the truth. When Dallas remained silent Holland improvised hurriedly.

"I may have been mistaken about the man being from the post, thought it could have been Reynolds. Why else would he desert, sir? Tully evidently disposed of the stuff to renegade whites or Apaches and split the profits with Reynolds and Nixon."

"Do you agree, Mr. Dallas?" Raven inquired.

"That seems to be the only reasonable explanation," Dallas replied.

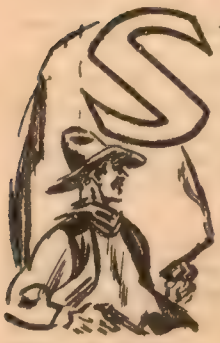
Raven took another turn up and down the room, then said gruffly:

"All right, gentlemen. That will be all for tonight. From now on we'll maintain a close watch on Corbett's ranch. As for Nixon and Reynolds, we'll let them go. They can take their chances with the Apaches."

Jim Hatfield, the Lone Wolf Ranger, storms a stronghold of dread and defies gun-hung renegades in KEEP OFF THIS RANGE, an exciting novel by Jackson Cole in the February issue of TEXAS RANGERS — now on sale, 15c!

CHAPTER XVI

The Broken Calm



SALUTING, Dallas and Holland went out into the night. They walked along the darkened parade toward Officers' Row. In front of Holland's 'dobe they stopped as if by some prearranged signal.

"What's your next move?" Holland asked in a tight voice. "Aim to do any talking about tonight."

"The time for talking is past," said Dallas. "I won't attempt to change your story. But I won't forget Tully. His death and Nixon's going away saved your bacon tonight. If you aim to stay in the Army I'm warning you to play straight down the middle from now on."

"And if I don't?" Holland's voice was intense with feeling.

"I promise you plenty of trouble," snapped Dallas. "You pulled yourself out of a hole by running to Raven with that story. The next time you may not have the chance." He paused, then added, "How long do you think you'd last with Blanche if she knew about tonight?"

Holland snorted in anger.

"Keep Blanche out of this."

"It's on her account alone that I'm keeping quiet," said Dallas. "I don't want to see her hurt."

Holland's face was a stiff mask.

"Leave Blanche to me," he said. "I'll do the worrying about her."

"Then you'd better start worrying."

Dallas turned away. Holland's voice pursued him through the shadows.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Figure it out for yourself," Dallas answered, and walked on. . . .

The next three weeks at Camp Breadon were comparatively quiet. The Aravaipas who had been laboring in the hay fields continued to work faithfuly. Others were working on the new guardhouse, now half completed. Dallas' irrigation project was making definite progress. Some of the Aravaipa crops were coming along rapidly and Dallas had made arrangements to buy vegetables regularly for the post mess.

When Roy Broderick appeared at the camp at the end of the second week he was surprised when Dallas cut the usual order of canned goods in half and reduced by almost sixty percent the regular order for hay and grain. The freight owner made no attempt to hide his displeasure.

"Why the cut in your order, Dallas?" he demanded.

"We just don't need as much food and fodder since we've got the Aravaipas producing crops for us," the lieutenant explained.

"That's a poor excuse," Broderick stated. "You were glad enough to take whatever you could get from Tucson up to now. Do you call it a square deal to cut us down now?"

A frown of annoyance creased Dallas' sun-browned forehead.

"You've got no kick, Roy. You've made plenty of money out of Breadon and the other Army posts in Arizona and you'll continue to make money. For the first time the Indians are beginning to make a decent living here and it'll keep them contented."

"I don't give a hoot about the Indians," Broderick said bluntly.

"But I do," said Dallas. "It's the Army's job to keep the Apaches at peace with the white men. What we're doing is a step in the right direction. Keeping the Apaches at work, with a chance to earn money, will help kill any ideas they might have about busting into the hills."

Broderick gave Dallas a drily amused, half-contemptuous glance. "How do you explain Shonten and the bucks he took away with him?"

"Maybe they wouldn't have gone if we'd thought of giving the Aravaipas work sooner."

"Huh! Notah is no better than Shonten or Naquino. An Apache is an Apache." Broderick prodded Dallas' chest with a long forefinger. "I'm telling you now you'll wind up by getting an Apache lance in your back."

"If I do, it won't be from any of Notah's bucks," said Dallas.

They left each other like that, with their mutual dislike stronger and more intense than ever.

THAT was the only break in post routine during the entire three weeks. Dallas, Holland and Waters, in turn, took scout details into the Pinals looking for signs of hostile Apaches.

After a few minor raids on hill ranchers, Shonten's band of renegade Aravaipas had apparently swung north out of the Maricopas. Even Naquino's bunch seemed to have gone into hiding.

The calm was shattered suddenly at three one morning when a band of hard-riding Aravaipas from Notah's camp passed through the sentry lines at Breadon. They galloped straight to Colonel Raven's quarters. Then came a sentry's shrill yell for Jim Bell.

Two minutes later Ronald's trumpet was blasting the night with the clarion call of "Assembly."

The shrill, ringing notes drove Bob Dallas out of a sound sleep and sent him fumbling for boots, pants, and shirt.

The tumult out along the parade grew as he hurriedly dressed, buckled on his sword belt and cartridge belt. When he raced into the open lights bloomed in the barracks, the stables and 'dobes on either side of the quadrangle. Men rushed back and forth, buttoning up their tunics as they ran.

Colonel Raven, ringed by six Aravaipas and Jim Bell, spotted Dallas running along the edge of the parade and called out to him.

"Dallas, I want thirty men right away, ready to ride!"

Dallas swerved toward the barracks, looking for Sergeant Guy Modoc. He found the burly, good-natured sergeant routing out the stragglers from Troop D.

"Sergeant, pick thirty men. I want them ready in five minutes with horses and carbines."

"Right, sir," Modoc answered and turned away. "Come on, you buckos. Outside and line up on the parade. Any man that isn't out of here in thirty seconds will get three days in the guardhouse. Get a move on!"

As Dallas ran back toward Headquarters Raven caught sight of him, started to say something, then held up his hand. The mounted Indians and Jim Bell looked in the direction of the Aravaipa camp. Just faintly could be heard the rattle of guns.

"It's started already!" growled Raven. He looked past Dallas and shouted impatiently to Modoc who already had his men counting off on the parade. "Sergeant, hurry it up!"

Holland ran up, out of breath. "What is it, sir?"

Raven gestured to the Aravaipas, three of whom were Indian policemen appointed by Notah.

"According to what these Aravaipas have told Jim Bell, they were riding out on the flats beyond the camp when they caught sight of a bunch of riders heading toward them. They looked like Indians. The Aravaipas cut back to camp, aroused Notah and came on here for help. From the sound of that firing I'd say the ruckus has already started."

"Naquino again!" Holland yelled. "No wonder he's been so quiet lately. Just laying back for a chance to hit when he was least expected."

"Naquino—or maybe renegades," Dallas cut in incisively.

"Never mind that now," Raven ordered. "Mr. Dallas take that detail and ride like the devil for the Aravaipa camp. Mr. Holland, you go along. I want those raiders this time. If you need more men, send a messenger back. I'd send more now, but we can't take a chance at night. The raid at the camp could be a tricky diversion to pull most of the troops out of Breadon and expose the post to a crushing attack."

Dallas and Holland ran toward the waiting troopers who stood at the heads of their horses, reins in hand. The two lieutenants claimed their own mounts.

DALLAS vaulted into the saddle of a rangy black, then gave the order for the rest of the troop to mount. He then lifted his hand and sent the detail rushing away at a dead run. The Aravaipas who had aroused Breadon rode right with the detail.

They struck the Santa Cruz ford without slackening speed. Beyond the river they spurred into a full gallop, already freeing their carbines from saddle scabbards. The sound of firing ahead continued—sporadic and uneven now.

The night was star-bright and cloudless. Long before they reached the outskirts of the Indian camp they could dis-

cern the figures of mounted men weaving in and out of the scattered wikiups, and could see the ruddy flash of muzzle flame streaking through the darkness.

Then the raiders, hearing pursuit approaching, gathered their forces for flight. Riders cut through the camp, joined others on the flats and spurred rapidly away.

The thirty soldiers swept into camp, carbines blasting. The night rocked to the harsh diapason of pounding guns and yelling men. Aravaipas flitted through the shadows, trying to catch horses that had not already joined the stampede. Squaws huddled near boulders or brush clumps, guarding frightened children. Notah, mounted on a big Morgan horse, sped up beside Dallas.

"Nantan!" he cried. A fierce gleam of pleasure filled his eyes. 'You—come in—time," he said falteringly in English.

"Who was it," Dallas demanded. "Naquino? Shonten?"

Jim Bell rode up and the Indian chief rattled off a few phrases in Apache. When he had finished the scout turned an excited face toward the lieutenant.

"He says he's sure the raiders were white men or Mexicans, dressed as Indians. And that ain't all. He says Broderick was among 'em!"

"Roy Broderick?"

"Yeah. Heard someone call him by name."

"Let's go then," snapped Dallas, jerking his horse around. He lifted his voice to the detail. "Proceed at a full gallop. This time we'll follow until we close in on the raiders."

Troopers bent low over their saddlehorns as they sped out of the camp at a fast run. Notah and some two dozen well-armed braves joined them.

There was a faint band of gray light low on the eastern horizon heralding the approach of dawn. Visibility was good and the raiders, a good two miles ahead, were easy to follow.

NEXT MONTH

Fangs for a Sun God

A White Phantom Story

By HAROLD F. CRUICKSHANK

CHAPTER XVII

Fatal Letter

MILE after mile the pursuit went on with the cavalry steadily gaining. They swept across a wide sandy plain, broke through patches of brush and cactus, then burst out into the open again.

Finally, the raiders ducked into a sandy wash and dropped from sight. Dallas halted the detail to issue brief orders.

"We'll split up!" he shouted.

"What's the idea?" demanded Holland, pushing his way forward. "We're wasting time here."

Dallas looked at him briefly, aware of the strange nervous excitement that gripped his fellow officer. When he answered, his words carried to the entire group.

"If Notah is right about those raiders being whites or Mexicans, they could have come from only one place—Tucson. They'll be heading back there. They took this wash to throw us off the trail. They'll leave it some place along the line and swing south again. I'll take half the detail and cut northeast. Holland, you take the others and follow their trail through the wash. If I'm right we'll catch them between us."

He didn't wait for Holland to voice his objections. Selecting fifteen of the soldiers at random, he pulled them along with him in a detour around the dry creek bed. Notah and his Aravaipas went along. Dallas turned in his saddle and was satisfied when he saw Holland, Modoc and the others streaming into the wash.

The land rolled in broken contours before Dallas. Slowly and almost imperceptibly the gray band far off in the east widened though the stars lingered in the sky and night was still upon the land. Dallas judged that they had covered three miles when a body of horsemen broke out of a thick tangle of chaparral.

"There they are!" Dallas yelled. "Dig hard."

The soldiers leaned forward, kicking

their laboring mounts for that last bit of speed. They stormed across the flats. Ahead of them the riders wavered, started angling off at a tangent. Dallas saw the maneuver, and split up his detachment, and sent seven or eight troopers with Notah's braves to block the raiders' escape.

In desperation, the renegades fled back in the direction whence they had come. Too late they saw the trap. A wave of blue-clad cavalrymen poured out of the brush. Army carbines began to bark. From all sides the soldiers from Camp Breadon rushed in for the kill.

"Hit them hard!" was Dallas' last shouted command before he was immersed in battle with hot lead droning all around him in the pale light of half-dawn.

He was dimly aware of the raiders ahead of him. Most of them wore nothing but old trousers or leggings, their dark chests streaked with paint.

Their lusty yells, their heavy bodies proved conclusively that they were not Apaches.

Two of the raiders charged Dallas. Guns blazed in their hands. Bullets whipped past him, fanning the breeze. Calmly he lifted his carbine and punched two shots at the nearest man. The horse lurched, and galloped on. The rider tipped backwards over the pommel and vanished in the dark.

The next man roared in, fired again. Dallas swerved his horse right at the renegade. He felt the hot breath of a bullet speeding past his face. With no room to level his carbine for a shot, Dallas swung it around and clubbed the man out of saddle.

He raced on, dropping a third outlaw who was drawing a bead on Notah, already engaged in hand-to-hand combat with one of the raiders. Back and forth across the malpais the battle raged. Men laughed and cried and died while gun-smoke and dust lifted in a suffocating cloud.

A trooper and a renegade met in a wild, headlong rush. Their horses crashed together and went down. Both men were thrown, the horses rolling over on them and trapping them. Notah took a slashing knife cut from a burly Mexican, then cleaved his skull with one blow from his tomahawk.

SUDDENLY the raiders' resistance broke. All around they were dropping their weapons in surrender, shouting to be spared.

And then, far across the clearing, Dallas saw two horsemen slink away under cover of the surrounding tangle of struggling men and horses. They vanished into the brush.

"Modoc!" Dallas yelled.

"Coming, sir!" the sergeant answered, and pounded toward him.

"Find Holland," Dallas ordered. "And take charge here. I'll be back."

Dallas neck-reined the big black gelding around and cut toward the clearing. The gelding had already been ridden hard, but now the gallant animal responded nobly to his rider's urging for speed.

Dallas reached the thorny brush where he had last seen the two riders and boldly pushed through. A narrow trail stretched beyond. He felt blood trickling down his right cheek from wounds where branches had punctured his skin.

The trail dipped abruptly into another wash. Ahead, Dallas heard the clatter of shod hoofs on gravel and knew his quarry was not far away.

Dallas levered a shell into the firing chamber of his carbine as the black raced around a winding bend. A shot crashed out. Gravel flew in a blinding spray from the side of the arroyo.

He saw them, then, two riders lashing their horses toward him. One man was big and solid. He hadn't bothered to strip. He was well-dressed. A flat-crowned black hat rested on his leonine head.

It was Roy Broderick. The other man, short and squat and wiry, his chest gleaming bronze and vermilion in the queer light of half dawn, was Shorty Russell.

Russell's arm lifted in a short arc. An orange-yellow gusher of flame squirted from his hand. Dallas, swinging his carbine in front of his body, felt something jolt the heavy wooden stock. A stinging sensation smote his hand, traveled all the way up his arm.

He glanced impatiently at the broken carbine stock, then flung the gun away. With his still numb hand he groped for his revolver. His fingers gripped the handle and drew it out. He fired once and missed, then laced a point-blank shot at the little man. The bullet tore through

Russell's throat. He fell limply forward against his saddle-horn.

At the same instant Broderick's charging horse struck the black. There was the quivering impact of flesh and bone meeting in a solid collision. A gun exploded in Dallas' face. He felt the searing heat of muzzle flame, smelled the acrid taint of burned powder.

Then Broderick had thrown his burly body full upon him, arms locked in a crushing grip around him. The black went to its knees. Dallas and Broderick tumbled out of saddle, rolled clear. Broderick's grip relaxed. Then Dallas felt the scrape of a gun barrel sliding along his thigh.

"This is your finish!" Dallas heard Broderick gasp in a half-strangled breath. Dallas still held his own gun. He jabbed the bore against Broderick's flesh and fired twice.

The barrel that had been sliding toward his own belt-line dug hard into his side. Dallas set himself. Would reflex action set off the shot?

But no shot came. A shudder went through Broderick. His arms dropped away from Dallas. His eyes, wide and sightless, rolled in their sockets as life fled his body.

Dallas dragged himself to his feet. Both Broderick's horse and his own had suffered broken forelegs. Beyond them, Russell's horse had stopped.

Dallas went up to the head of each horse and dispatched it quickly. An aching weariness had hold of him now, a feeling of bitterness that white men like Broderick and Russell could join forces in assault upon friendly Indians, and thereby jeopardize the life of every white settler in the territory.

He understood now how jealously Broderick had resented the meager prosperity of Notah's friendly Aravaipas.

He went up to Broderick and made a routine search of his pockets. In an inside pocket he found several folded papers—a bill for new freight wagons, a bill of lading for Camp Breadon, and a scrawled note from Frank Holland.

The note, short but revealing, read:

Dear Roy:
Thanks for the two hundred. This time I'll see to it that you don't win it back from me at poker.

As far as that raid on the Aravaipa camp is concerned, I suggest you wait until Wednesday night. Some of Notah's braves will be off in the hills hunting. Hope you have better luck than last time.

Frank Holland

DALLAS' hand closed over the note, wrinkling it into a tight ball. Shock and rage pelted through him.

He was bending down to replace the other papers in Broderick's pocket when a clipped voice behind him stopped him cold.

"I'll take those papers, Bob—the one in your right fist, too."

Dallas turned slowly. Standing directly behind him on the gravelly bank of the wash was Frank Holland. His uniform was dusty. A bloody gash made a thin, wavering line through the dust on his face.

Dallas opened his hand, the crinkled ball of paper unfolding with a slight, crinkling noise in his palm. He stared up at Holland and at the long-barreled gun which Holland was pointing at his chest.

"I reckon you know what's in the note, Frank," he said.

Holland nodded. He was tense and uneasy, and suddenly Dallas realized that he had never witnessed the grim, almost ruthless look that was now in Holland's eyes.

"Too bad you had to see that, Bob," Holland said.

There was a threat in the words. Dallas felt his shoulder muscles twitch. A chill seeped inside him, penetrating deep.

"You haven't stopped at anything, have you, Frank?" he asked, pity mingling with the contempt in his voice.

Holland's jaw hardened. His knuckles whitened around the gun.

"Walk over here, Bob, and hand me that paper," he ordered.

Behind Holland, brush rattled and crashed. He did not turn. Dallas remained immobile, watching Holland's horse drift into view. And as he looked into Holland's desperate eyes he knew how this thing would be.

There was a frigid sensation in Dallas' chest as he moved toward Holland. His breathing was a thin thread. He reached the arroyo bank. Holland towered above him.

Dallas extended his right hand upward. Holland leaned down. The fingers of his

left hand groped toward the crumpled note. He was just a little off balance when Dallas' right hand jerked up, trapping Holland's gun-hand in an iron grip. He whirled around, his back to Holland. The gun went off, the shot banging into the dry earth. Then Dallas dragged Holland's arm over his shoulder, ducked low and heaved Holland clear across his back.

Holland struck the wash with a jolting impact. The gun flew from his fingers. He lay there, stiff and unmoving, all the wind knocked out of him. Dallas drew his own gun and gestured for Holland to rise.

"This finishes you in the Army, Frank."

Holland pushed himself painfully to his feet. A sharp rock had torn his tunic in the back. He looked suddenly haggard and beaten. Only in his eyes there was still an ugly, red-veined fury.

"That ought to make you feel good," he sneered.

"You're dead wrong," snapped Dallas. "I'm thinking it's the devil of a thing for a cavalryman to fall so low. And I'm thinking of Blanche, and how much this is going to hurt her."

Holland's face twisted miserably.

"You accursed liar," he growled. "This is the chance you've been waiting for."

There was no gainsaying that bitterness and defeat which now claimed Holland. Silently Dallas retrieved Holland's revolver. He found two unfired cartridges in the chamber and threw them away. Then he handed the gun to Holland.

"Consider yourself under arrest," he said. "You can keep the gun until we reach Breadon."

Then, catching up Holland's horse as well as Russell's, Dallas gave the order to mount. They rode back to the clearing where the fight with the renegades had taken place. Modoc had rounded up all the captives. He looked inquiringly at the two lieutenants when they rode up, but he said nothing. And Dallas gave him no information concerning Holland.

Tersely he explained how he had followed Broderick and Russell and shot them down. Holland's silence was, in a sense, to be expected since Dallas was commanding the detail.

The captives were ordered to mount. A half-dozen soldiers were dispatched to search for wounded men. Two more were sent to bring back the bodies of Broderick and Russell.

"I'll send out a burying detail from camp after we get back," Dallas said, then gave the order for the detachment to move on.

CHAPTER XVIII

Hostage!

WHEN Dallas' weary detail splashed through the Santa Cruz ford and entered the post grounds they found the camp seething with activity. Soldiers were lining up along the parade. From the corrals men were leading saddled horses. A steady sound of hammering issued from the blacksmith shop. Down near the commissary building soldiers were lashing sacks of food and great canvas water bags to pack mules.

Colonel Raven was limping back and forth, shouting orders to Sergeant Jack O'Hara of Troop F and to Corporal Lavelle. Even the usually calm Holly Adkins was rushing about in a high state of excitement.

There were more Aravaipas around, too. And then Dallas spotted Lieutenant Wilmer and three soldiers from Fort Huachuca. They looked as if they had been in a fight. Suddenly that thought sent an icy current of fear up and down his back. He dropped out of saddle and went forward at a lurching run.

"Wilmer!" he cried. "What happened to you?"

Before the lieutenant from Huachuca could answer, Dallas' glance swiveled to Raven's face. The commandant's ruddy features seemed to be drained of blood. His skin hung flabbily. He looked like a broken man.

And suddenly the drone of Wilmer's choked voice gave Dallas the answer.

"It's Miss Raven. The Apaches got her!"

Dallas forced air through the ice that suddenly blocked his windpipe. He for-

got about Holland. He forgot everything in his anxiety for Blanche.

"What happened?" he demanded harshly.

"The old story," said Wilmer in a ragged voice. "There hadn't been any sign of Apaches for weeks, then suddenly, forty miles from Breadon they hit us in a mile-long canyon. It's a wonder any of us got out alive."

Dallas, oblivious of the staring enlisted men, grasped Wilmer and shook him. "But Blanche was supposed to stay at Huachuca!"

"It was her own idea," Colonel Raven broke in wearily. "Mrs. Devore is all right now. My birthday is tomorrow and I reckon she was set on surprising me."

"That was it," said Wilmer, mopping at his face with a blue bandanna. "And with the Apaches quiet the past few weeks Major Devore thought it would be safe to make the trip."

For the first time Holland spoke. He pushed a few curious soldiers out of his path and walked up to Wilmer. Shock and fear held him in a ruthless grip. He, too, was thinking of Blanche.

"I want to know one thing," he stated, "Was it Naquino?"

"No," replied Wilmer. "It was Shonten and his Aravaipas."

"Shonten!" shouted Dallas. "You're sure of that?"

"Saw him myself. Had about thirty braves with him and they were heading toward the Pinals."

Holland whirled to face Dallas. He forgot that he was under arrest. Anger was at white heat inside him. He came toward Dallas, big hands balled into fists.

"There are your pampered Aravaipas!" he shoulted. "And they've got Blanche! If they've hurt her you'll hear from me!"

Dallas stared silently at him until his temper had simmered down. Slowly Holland's face lost color and he was thinking of other things—ugly things that were known to Dallas and himself alone.

"Get a grip on yourself, Mr. Holland," said Raven. "Talking against the Aravaipas won't help. Shonten is bad medicine. But I'd trust Notah and others of his band as far as I would any soldier in the post. In fact, Notah has already promised me thirty of his best warriors to help us run down Shonten and Naquino."

"And Naquino?" Dallas queried. "Does that mean they've joined forces in the hills?"

"It looks that way," said Raven. "Lieutenant Waters just returned with a scout detail. He had a brush with Naquino in the Pinals. Coming back to the post he cut fresh sign of Apaches heading toward Naquino's favorite raiding grounds. That sign was left by Shonten's band."

THE commandant's flinty gaze roved the busy parade. Feverish preparations for a major campaign were everywhere in evidence. Huge dust clouds filled the corrals as sweating, cursing soldiers roped out horses and flung saddles on their backs. The hammering in the blacksmith shop went on unceasingly.

"This is the big test," Raven said. "We've waited long enough, trying to force Naquino into some sort of a finish fight. This time I'm going all out. Not just because of Blanche—though she's all I have and God knows I love her—but because we can't let Naquino and Shonten rove these hills together." He turned to the officer whose detail had only come in. "Waters," he said, "I'm leaving you here with twenty men and myself. Not much of a guard for an Army post. But every other man will be needed in the field."

Raven turned his attention to Dallas and went on in a clipped voice that showed his emotion.

"Mr. Dallas, I'm putting you in charge of this venture. I've given orders for enough supplies and ammunition to be packed for a ten-day trip. You won't have a lot of men but, with Notah's Aravaipas, it should be enough to lick Shonten and Naquino. They'll run, as they always do. But I want you to keep pressing them. Don't give them any rest. Force a fight. But don't let Naquino pick the spot. Pick your own. That will be important, because they'll outnumber you.

"There's one more thing. Though you'll be in charge I expect you to respect the judgment and advice of Jim Bell and Notah who have had more experience than you or anyone else, myself included, in fighting Indians."

Dallas looked at the commandant levelly.

"Yes, sir," he said crisply. "But may I

offer a suggestion?"

"What is it?" demanded Raven. He turned away at once and yelled across the parade. "Get a move on! Modoc! O'Hara! I want this detail ready in another twenty minutes." Almost reluctantly his attention came back to Dallas. "Well?"

"In view of the fact that the detail will be seriously handicapped for lack of men I would like your permission to take along the two howitzers," Dallas said.

"What howitzers?"

"Don't you remember, sir? They were part of the equipment of the company of infantry that was stationed here about a year ago. They're still in the old storehouse with enough ball and shot for a few brief sorties, at least. We can transport them in ambulance wagons and keep them covered so the Apaches won't get wind of them."

Sudden interest livened Raven's weather-burned face.

"The suggestion is a good one—except for one thing. Who will you get to man the cannon?"

"Sergeant Modoc has handled howitzers, and so have one or two of the soldiers in my troop. Modoc can break in any additional men he needs."

"All right. Take them along."

Dallas saluted and walked away, calling for Modoc. He met the sergeant near the blacksmith shop and ordered him to get the howitzers out and see that they were cleaned and loaded into the wagons.

Turning away, Dallas found Frank Holland beside him. Holland's face was hard and bitter.

"How long are you going to drag it out?" he asked. "If you're going to turn me in, do it now."

"I've changed my mind," Dallas told him curtly. "The Army needs every man in this fight. Even men like you, Frank. You'll have your chance to kill more Apaches. . . ."

THREE days out from camp Breadon, Dallas halted the straggling column of troopers deep in the hot and rugged Pinals. Since the previous afternoon they had been pursuing the combined bands of Naquino and Shonten. And during the last hours of this day the Apaches had become bolder in their retreat.

The Indians had made little attempt to disguise their trail or even to hide themselves. That was a warning to Dallas that Naquino was probably getting ready to turn and fight.

Now with purple dusk crowding down upon the land, and the weary column ready to make camp, Dallas scanned a line of peaks ahead of them. Somewhere beyond those rocky ramparts the Tonto and Aravaipa renegades had taken refuge. Hour by hour the country had grown rougher, harder for cavalry, with all the accoutrements of a long campaign, to maintain pursuit of the light-traveling Indians.

Dallas was thinking of this and of the strain that three days' steady riding had put upon his men when two riders spurred out of the brush near the base of one of the peaks. Notah and the civilian scout, Jim Bell. They galloped up to the dismounted detail.

"Find them, Jim?" Dallas asked the scout.

"Yeah." Bell shifted a cud of tobacco in his cheek and spat in the dust. "Naquino has his bunch camped on top of a ridge about three miles past that peak yonder. Shonten is parked on another ridge nearby."

"Did you see Blanche?" Holland demanded.

Bell nodded grimly. "She's still with Shonten. She was riding a big gray. They let Notah and me see her along the ridge top. You can guess why."

"Sure," said Holland. "They're using her as bait to lure us into a scrap."

"Right. They figure we'll be so het up about getting her back that we'll try to carry those ridges in an open fight."

"I've got different ideas," said Dallas as he scanned the towering bluff.

"You can't sit back and wait!" Holland blurted.

"I mean to get Blanche back tonight and still force the Apaches to fight where I want them to fight."

Bell carefully studied the young lieutenant.

"What's on your mind, Bob?"

Again Dallas stared at the rampart of rocks thrusting their misshapen bulk toward the darkening sky.

"Jim," he said, "that bluff ahead of us forms a wide, shallow bowl surrounded on four sides by a natural rock wall."

"That's right," the scout acknowledged. "And the country around the bowl is open for two or three hundred yards around on all sides. There's brush and more rocks to the north with only one trail leading through—the trail Naquino and Shonten had to take to get to those ridges. Am I right?"

"Sure," said Bell. Then he frowned. "You're not thinking of holing up in that bowl?"

Dallas' reply came with a quiet deadliness of purpose.

"That's just what I aim to do."

Holland voiced immediate and angry disapproval.

"You'll be taking everyone here to his death! Those Apaches will surround that bluff and cut us to ribbons."

Dallas shook his head in savage negation.

"I figure it'll be just the opposite. If we can force Naquino and Shonten to take their braves off those ridges in an attack on the bowl we'll have them. That's open land around the bowl with no brush or rocks for protection. And with two howitzers blasting away at them, I think we can more than even the odds." He looked at the scout. "What do you say, Jim?"

Bell gazed away to the north, studying the land with shrewd eyes. He spoke in Apache to Notah. The Indian replied briefly, then glanced toward Dallas. The somber look of approval in the aged Apache's muddy eyes told Dallas that he had won his point. And Bell confirmed it.

"Pretty good figuring, Bob," the scout averred. "Notah agrees that it's our best bet. But what about Blanche?"

Dallas was ready for the question. He quickly outlined a plan to take only a few men and attempt to sneak into Shonten's camp in the middle of the night to effect Blanche's rescue. To take an entire detail of men would be too noisy and might lead to a heavy loss of men. If the attempt were to succeed at all, it must be made by a few men, traveling light and fast.

After some debate it was determined that Dallas, Holland, Bell, Notah and two of Notah's best Aravaipa scouts should make the trip to Shonten's camp. With that matter settled Dallas ordered the column to get under way again. At the double they rode across the malpais until they struck a brush-strewn trail that wound up the side of the bluff.

CHAPTER XIX

Rescue!

FULLY an hour was required to get the entire detail into the bowl. The greatest difficulty was encountered in towing the heavy ambulance wagons up the narrow path. Halfway to the summit a wagon overturned and one of the howitzers rolled out. It skidded several feet down the grade and finally brought up against a huge boulder.

The accident was disheartening. But Dallas quickly doubled the number of men around the second wagon to prevent a similar misfortune.

Then he joined Modoc and the handful of soldiers who were ordered off their horses to help reload the first howitzer into the wagon. It was hazardous, back-breaking work, but at last they got the howitzer back into place and the journey was resumed.

It was well after dark before the entire column was able to settle down to making camp. Both cannon were set into position near the rim of the bowl, facing north. They were carefully shored up with rocks and hidden behind thick brush.

Horses were unsaddled and taken away to graze. Supplies were unpacked. Soon the men were seated along the ground in small groups, eating cold dried beef and biscuits and washing the food down with water from their canteens.

At eleven o'clock Dallas ordered six horses saddled. When they were brought up by one of the troopers, the rescue party mounted and rode off into the night.

They followed the steep grade downward into a tangle of brush that broke reluctantly to form a thin trail, angling toward the north. A quarter moon coasted serenely above a huge bank of clouds, but its pale light was almost completely blotted out by overlapping trees.

Bell and Notah stayed out in front, stopping every now and then to listen and study the land ahead of them. For even now the brush might be alive with skulking Apaches sent to spy on the soldiers' encampment.

But if there were Apaches around, the rescue detail found no sign of them. Bell and Notah led them clear of the tangled brush, sent them detouring around a rocky defile until at last a high ridge loomed above them. At a signal from the scout they all dismounted.

"From here on we go on foot," Bell told them in a hoarse whisper. "Shonten's bunch is above us."

"No campfire," Dallas observed.

"Maybe; maybe not," said Bell. "Apaches have a way of making fire without showing flames or smoke."

A sudden chill seemed to pervade the air and Dallas found himself looking nervously at the trees that hemmed them in. Holland's face, too, was tight with strain.

"Let's go," said Dallas.

Ground-hobbling their horses, the six men began the slow and precarious climb up the wooded slope. Foot by foot, yard by yard they scrambled through the brush, sometimes crawling on hands and knees to avoid treading on twigs or brushing against branches.

Sweat rolled down their faces and the pressure of maintaining a completely silent approach steadily mounted as they wondered if the next bush or rock concealed the crouching Apaches.

Something cold and hard was closing around Dallas' heart. His hand, gripping his carbine, was clammy.

The slope began to flatten out; the steep pitch lessened noticeably. The brush thinned out a little, too.

And then as Dallas and Notah scrambled around the side of a rock something moved in the darkness. It was as if the darkness itself took on fluid motion.

Dallas and Notah plunged forward. The great blob of shadow in front of them dissolved and broke away into two separate and distinct shapes. Notah met one of those running shapes. Dallas saw the Aravaipa chief lock in a desperate struggle, then the other Apache charged him.

Dallas swung the carbine viciously. Something sharp grazed his left arm. Then the jolt of his rifle barrel, striking the Indian, sent its own distinct shock running along the muscles of his arm.

The Apache went down and Dallas leaped on top of him. He abandoned the carbine. His razor-sharp knife drove into the squirming flesh beneath him.

AT ONCE all fight drained out of the Indian. Dallas pulled out his knife and rose shakily to his feet. Notah and Bell crowded close. The Aaravaipa chief was significantly wiping his knife blade on his tattered trousers.

"Careful now," Bell whispered. "There may be more of the varmints around. We'll have to move fast in case those two braves are missed."

For a brief space they lingered there in the brush, waiting to see if any sound of the brief struggle had carried to Shonten's camp. Then they pushed on, halting at the crest of the ridge.

Below them, in a huge cuplike depression in the earth was the Indian camp. A small fire blazed in the niche of a rock wall at the end of the bowl. By its glittering light the rescue party could see the huddled figures of Apaches stretched out on the ground, asleep.

There were two or three brush jacals near the fire. A lean, dark Apache, long spear in hand, stood on guard in front of the smallest jacal. He appeared to be the only one awake in the camp.

"I reckon we'll find Blanche in that jacal where the Indian is on guard," Jim Bell muttered to Dallas.

No one spoke after that. Every man was intently watching the Apaches. And every man was thoroughly aware that the next few minutes would make them or break them. They were tremendously outnumbered. Even the advantage of surprise might avail them nothing.

A gray fog of doubt began to envelop Dallas. The night seemed to press solidly against him, watching him in a hushed and secret stillness that was menacing.

Suddenly he straightened and turned to Bell.

"Shonten has his horses picketed over in that little glade beyond the bowl. Can't see from here if he has any buck guarding them, but we'll have to take a chance."

Bell peered closely at him.

"You want to stampede their horses."

"Yeah," said Dallas. "Tell Notah to send his two braves down there. Tell them to give us fifteen minutes, then scatter those critters through the camp. By that time we ought to be near that jacal. In the confusion we might get clear."

"Risky business," observed Bell.

"Sure. You can figure out yourself how much chance we have of sneaking down there among those Apaches without arousing half the camp. If they do come awake that horse stampede will keep them plenty busy."

"All right, Bob," said the scout.

He spoke briefly to the Aravaipa chief. Notah nodded, spoke to his two braves, and they went trotting off into the darkness. Dallas watched them disappear before giving the order to move.

"Down we go," he said. "No shooting unless it's absolutely necessary. We'll keep to the brush and try to come up behind the jacal."

Bell jerked his head in a nod, then slithered away through the trees. Dallas fell in behind him. Notah and Holland brought up the rear. It was slow, nerve-wracking work going down that incline, dodging through the brush, stepping over deadfalls—without making any betraying noise.

A could sweat covered Dallas' body before they were halfway down. He was plagued by the fear that Notah's braves would stampede the horses before they got to the jacal.

But at last they reached the chaparral a few rods from the fire. The Apache with the lance stood in the same spot. The other Indians slumbered on. No sound issued from the jacal, but Dallas was certain Blanche was inside.

Bell and Notah crept forward silently on moccasined feet. Each man gripped a knife. The dark, shining back of the Apache guard loomed larger and larger.

Then Holland, unable to contain himself any longer, stepped away from the brush. A dry twig crackled under his boot. The Apache guard whirled around. He raised his spear for a thrust as Bell rushed in under his arm and drove his knife into the Indian's heart.

Another Indian appeared around the side of the jacal. Notah met him with thrusting knife. The Apache yelled once, lashed at Notah, then fell under the chieftain's unerring strike.

All at once the camp was aroused. Three Indians near the jacal rolled to their feet, groping for their weapons. Dallas and Holland fired at them point-blank.

At the other end of camp, there was the shrill clatter of guns, followed by loud yells. Some of the renegade Apaches were pulled in that direction by the disturbance. But they turned back as horses began thundering toward them.

DALLAS raced for the jacal. "Blanche!" he called as he dashed inside.

He half expected to meet another Indian guard. His gun was ready to blast when he collided with a running figure.

"Bob! Bob!"

It was Blanche, flinging herself against him and holding to him.

"I knew you'd find out!" she sobbed. "I knew you'd come!"

He grabbed her and steered her outside.

"No time to lose," he said. "We've got to get out of here."

Holland met them near the opening. "Blanche!" he called hoarsely, and started toward her.

The fleeing figure of an Indian darted between them. The Apache lunged for Blanche. Dallas flung up his gun. But it was Holland who moved in and slugged the Indian with his revolver barrel.

Pandemonium broke loose in Shonten's camp as the renegade Aravaipas' horses plunged frantically back and forth across the bowl. Indians, rising from the ground where they had been sleeping, were trampled under pounding hoofs. Others raced after the ponies, striving to catch their reins and leap on their backs.

"Grab horses!" Dallas yelled. "It's the best way out."

A wild-eyed black galloped toward him. He leaped aside as the horse lunged past, then flung himself against the frightened animal. He was nearly knocked off his feet, but his groping hands caught the reins. He held on, though he was dragged twenty feet before the horse was forced to slow down.

Notah and Bell had already found horses and Holland was running down a big gray. When he missed, Bell charged toward him, leaned down and hoisted the

lieutenant up in front of him. Blanche lifted up her arms as Dallas rode back toward her. He scooped her up in front of him.

Several hostile Aravaipas, riding captured horses, galloped hard to intercept them in their wild dash up the slope to the ridge. A husky, hawk-nosed Indian was in the lead. Dallas recognized him as Shonten, leader of the Aravaipa malcontents.

He brought up his gun, fired, and missed. He saw an angry red flame leap from the Indian's leveled rifle. Bell, riding ahead of him, lurched against Holland as a bullet struck him.

A piercing war whoop spilled from Shonten's lungs. He drove his horse forward. Holland, fighting to control the horse, was unable to protect Bell or himself from the Apache's onslaught. Dallas shouted at Shonten, drawing his attention.

The hawk-faced Indian twisted around. His rifle barrel lifted toward Dallas. But Dallas' finger was already squeezing the trigger of his revolver, blasting two shots into Shonten's ugly features.

Then they were away, galloping up the slope. Notah dropped one Apache who leaped up from the ground in a desperate endeavor to grab his horse's bridle. Behind them screams and yells filled the night. Indians on foot and horseback gathered for the pursuit.

At the crest of the ridge there was no sign of the two Indians Notah had dispatched to stampede the horses. But with Shonten's renegade warriors pressing close behind them there was no time to wait.

Dallas piled out of saddle and pulled Blanche to the ground. Holland helped Bell down. The scout had been wounded in the side. He was in great pain, but he insisted he could go on. With Notah helping him on one side and Holland on the other, Bell started down the far side of the ridge. Dallas and Blanche followed.

They plunged recklessly down the grade, sometimes stumbling and falling, but always picking themselves up to go on. A dull crashing above them told them that some of the Aravaipas were hot on their trail. But the steepness of the slope had forced Shonten's braves to abandon their mounts, too, so the Indians failed to gain on their quarry.

Notah and Holland were literally dragging Bell between them by the time they reached their horses. Somehow they hoisted the scout into his saddle and Notah climbed up behind him. Dallas helped Blanche onto his own horse. Holland came over, trying to push Dallas away.

"I'll take care of Blanche now," he growled.

"This is no time to argue about who rides double," said Dallas. "Get your horse and ride."

Holland hesitated, staring up at Blanche. She smiled at him, a small, tired smile thinly edged with panic.

"Please, Frank—they're coming nearer!" she pleaded.

Nodding surlily, Holland went to his horse.

CHAPTER XX

Tonto Roundup

DALLAS hit the saddle, spurred his own horse into a hard run. They crashed headlong through briar thickets until they hit the trail back to their own camp.

The Apaches, forced by the steepness of the grade to chase the invaders on foot, could not hope to match the speed of the fleeing rescue party. Their only chance would be to lead horses down the slope or go back and swing over to the north to another trail.

Dallas kept the rescue party going at a full gallop until they reached the outer sentry lines. They were passed through, and while Jim Bell was being rushed to Holly Adkins for medical attention, Dallas assisted Blanch from her horse.

"Are you all right, Blanche?" he asked, his voice husky. "They didn't harm you?"

"I'm all right, Bob," she whispered. "They didn't hurt me—though I think Shonten intended to sell me to Naquino." She shuddered at the harrowing memory of her experiences. "It was bad, for a while, Bob. How Lieutenant Wilmer ever

got away is a miracle." She smiled tearfully. "And now this—another miracle."

The smile left her face suddenly and deep color flooded her face. Holland had silently approached.

"Here's another hero for you to greet, Blanche," Holland said. His words were barbed. "Or did you forget about me?"

"Frank, please don't say things like that," she begged and came into his arms to take his rough caress.

But even then there was an odd feeling of restraint in her, something deep inside that drew her away from him, made her lips unresponsive. Holland sensed her withdrawal. He gripped her arms hard, held her away from him.

"Frank!" she cried. "What's the matter?"

Holland's bitter gaze lingered upon her, then shifted to Dallas. "I ought to ask you that," he said.

"Why?" The question flew from her lips. Then her eyes widened in understanding. She tried to cover up by talking. "Frank, it's good to see you." She moved toward him again.

"I wish I knew you meant that," Holland said savagely. He drew her into his arms. But instead of kissing her he glanced at Dallas and added in a low voice: "Well, now's your chance."

Blanch noted the burning flash in Holland's eyes.

"What is it, Bob? Is there something wrong?"

Dallas shook his head, knowing what was in Holland's mind.

"There are bigger things than you or I at stake right now, Frank," he said evenly. "The fight is only beginning. And right now I think Blanche needs some rest. Have Modoc set up a tent for her." He looked at her and murmured softly: "Good night, Blanche. . . ."

The Apaches attacked at dawn. They came in a great brown wave, rolling up out of the brush and spilling their yelling numbers in a deadly circle around the rocky bowl in which the cavalry detail was deployed. There were more than two hundred renegade Tontos, Chiricahuas and Aravaipas in the band, and the towering figure of the dreaded Naquino led them in their furious charge.

The troopers had readied their crude fort for the assault during the night. The howitzers were all set up and four men detailed to man each one. Kegs of powder and cannon balls were stacked in orderly array.

But looking at the great horde of Apaches Lieutenant Dallas had his moment of doubt as to whether he could carry this fight. True, the cannon were a tremendous advantage. But his supply of powder and balls was limited. For that reason he ordered the men at the cannon to hold their fire.

Carbines were cracking all around the bowl as the troopers lined their sights at the weaving targets. Bullets from the attacking Apaches whirled into the bowl, slammed into the rocky walls. Over-eager troopers who ventured to show themselves had already been cut down by Apache lead.

"Give them a dose of those cannon!" Holland roared as he ran up beside Dallas, kneeling behind a rock and firing rhythmically at the circling Indians.

"Not yet!" Dallas said. "They're too widely scattered now. We can't waste the powder. Wait for a frontal assault. It's bound to come."

AND Dallas was right. The Indians quickly withdrew when the withering fire of the troopers kept them from getting close to the rock redoubts. While they huddled at the edge of brush Dallas shifted his men, placing most of them along the north wall. Twenty minutes later Naquino led the second charge. The Apaches came on fast in a solid phalanx.

Side by side the troopers knelt, pouring a wicked hail of bullets into the Indian ranks. A dozen pitched lifelessly from their ponies, only to be replaced by others.

"The cannon!" shouted Dallas.

Modoc's men were ready. Both howitzers roared simultaneously. There was a smashing concussion, a huge puff of smoke and two cannon balls went screaming into the Apache lines, bowling over men and horses. Again and again the cannon roared. Each time they took a fearful toll of lives.

Even so, a number of Apaches managed to break through. Troopers found themselves locked in hand-to-hand conflict with painted warriors. Indian lances found soldier tunics. Army revolvers made their

round black mark upon Indian chests.

The cannon kept blasting as Modoc's soldiers sweated to turn the heavy field pieces around for pointblank firing. One of the howitzers was knocked out temporarily when several Apaches rushed the redoubt and killed half the gun crew.

Dallas and Holland immdiately led reinforcements to the spot and closed the breach. Dallas killed two Tontos with snap shots from his revolved. Holland tallied another but was hit by an Apache arrow that snagged his shoulder.

He reeled to one side, tugging at the shaft, as Naquino, the Tonto chief, flung himself over a rock and drove the point of his lance into Holland's chest. Dallas pumped two shots into the big Tonto just the Naquino thrust home his lance. But it was too late to save Holland.

Holland fell, his cry of agony stopped by the gush of blood from his mouth. Dallas yelled for Holly Adkins, then gave all his attention to Naquino.

The big Tonto chieftain, his face and body streaked with slashing lines of vermilion paint, was still on his feet. His eyes distorted by pain and fury, he leaped at Dallas with outflung spear. Dallas lunged aside, but the point of the lance drove into his side. Pinned to the ground, looking up into the fierce face above him, Dallas lifted his revolver and emptied it into the Apache.

A black veil began to drift over Dallas' senses, then. He heard the cannon roaring. There was a sharp, searing pain in his side which he instinctively knew must be someone drawing out the lance. Holly Adkins was yelling and somewhere a softer voice was calling.

Dallas fought the black tide of unconsciousness with all the power of his will. He opened his eyes. There was Blanche a few yards away, bending over Frank Holland. Faintly he could hear Holland's broken voice.

"Blanche, I—I hope you'll—forgive me. I—I—"

His voice failed and his body, which had been straining toward her, sank back.

"Frank—Frank!" she cried. Dallas tried to see her face, the expression in her eyes. But blackness washed over him and swept him away. . . .

When he came to again Blanche was there, only this time she was right beside him and her eyes were full of anxiety.

"Bob!" she cried joyously. "You're going to be all right. Holly Adkins says so."

Dallas smiled feebly. The gunfire had dwindled to a few brief bursts. He tried to raise himself on one elbow to survey his defenses.

"Modoc!" he called, but his voice came out in a hoarse croak.

HOLLY ADKINS wandered over. The medical officer looked tired. There was blood and dust all over his tunic. And there was blood on his hands—the life blood of Army men who had fallen beneath Apache guns and lances.

"Modoc is busy rounding up Tontos," Adkins told him. "Only a few got away. Most of them that are still alive are ready to go back to Breadon. With Naquino and Shonten dead they've got no one to lead them."

"But that last charge—" Dallas began.

"Those howitzers turned the trick," Adkins said. He paused while a meager smile quirked his dry, cracked lips. "I reckon Arizona will be a safe place to live in for a while."

Dallas nodded. "Yeah. Safe for whites and Indians alike."

From somewhere came a trooper's high-pitched cry of pain. Adkins' face sobered and he hurried off. Now that the fight was over his work was only beginning.

Dallas watched the medical officer move away with his great, long-legged strides. Then he turned back to Blanche and to the wrinkled sheet of paper in her hands. It was the note Frank Holland had written to Roy Broderick.

"Where did you get that?" Dallas demanded, almost harshly.

Her eyes met his evenly, without flinching. "It was on the ground, under your shoulder," she said. "It must have fallen out of your pocket."

"I was hoping you'd never find out about that," he murmured.

Her face was troubled and the memory of many things placed a bleak, gray sheen over her eyes.

"It's all right, Bob. Perhaps, it's better this way."

He kept remembering how she had leaned over Holland as Holland gasped out those final, agonized words.

"There was a lot of good in Frank," he said. "He was a real soldier—he proved that today in the way he died. He was just a little too wild, a little too anxious to get ahead."

Blanche placed her fingers upon Dallas' lips. With her hair tumbled about her tanned face, a streak of dirt running the length of her nose, and her eyes strangely alive with an expression he could not fathom, she seemed very beautiful to him.

"Bob," she whispered softly, "you don't have to say anything."

"But you and Frank—"

"I know. That's all over now. It's been all over, for some time." She was looking away from Dallas now, avoiding his searching glance. "Once I thought that he and I—well, it was wonderful. And then something happened, and everything was changed."

"When was this?" Dallas asked.

Blanche didn't answer immediately, but Dallas' silence finally drew her eyes reluctantly to his face.

"A few weeks ago," she said.

"Huachuca?" he asked suddenly.

Their glances came gently together. She wouldn't answer him, but the light in her eyes grew brighter and brighter.

"Blanche," said Dallas, "you asked me once about a girl—my girl. Do you still want to know who she is?"

"Yes," she whispered, her eyes now wistful and uncertain.

Dallas smiled. "She's the same girl I've always had at Breadon. Only she's never known she was my girl, until this moment."

Blanche smiled, too. And through the tears that welled into her eyes she saw Dallas' arms reaching for her. She moved willingly into his embrace. His lips came down against hers.

In that moment they knew that no matter what the future might bring, new campaigns against other Indian bands or the dull routine of desert patrol, they were sure of a full life enriched by abiding love.

•

Next Issue's Novel: IRON TAIL'S ARROW, by HARRY RUBICAM, JR.

FROM ROUNDHOUSE TO MAIN LINE

Carhartt OVERALLS

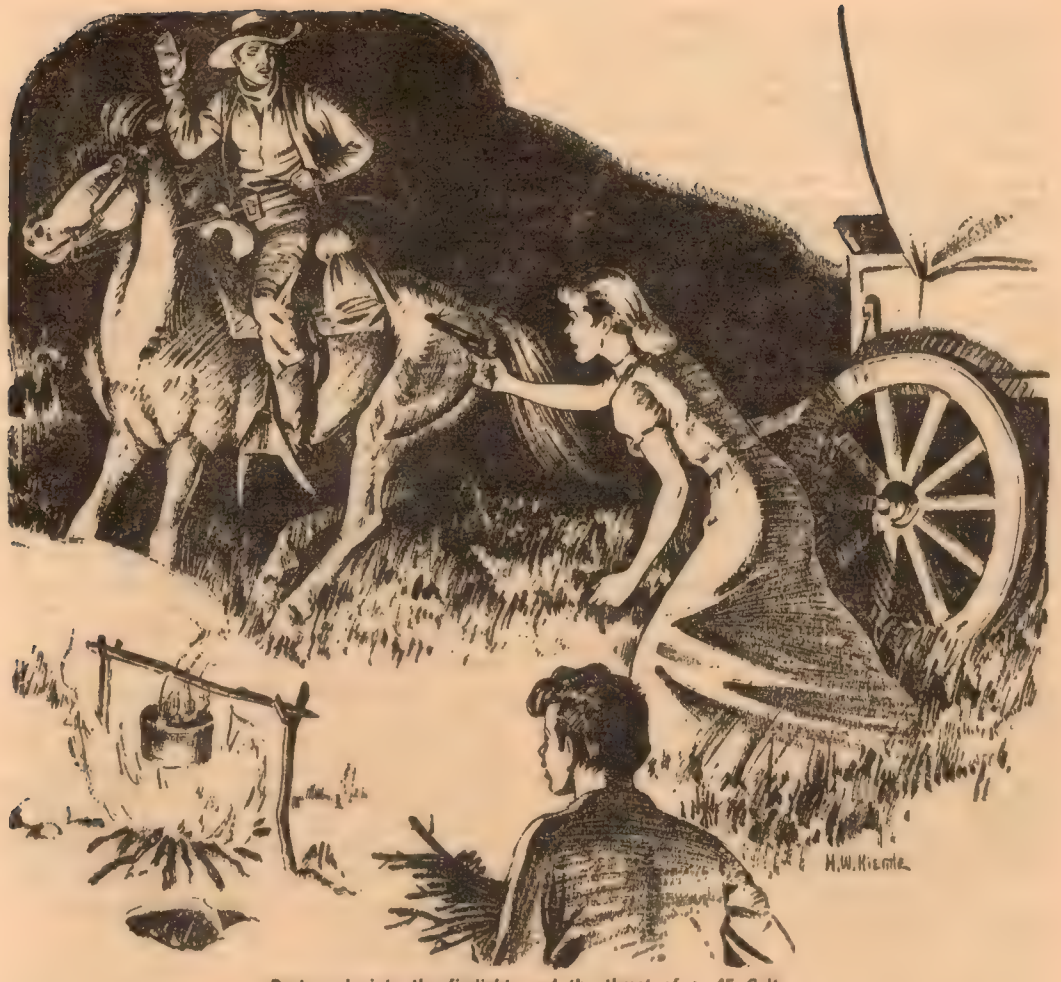
Have Been a Clear Track Favorite for Over 50 Years

No matter what your job—headender on a highliner, axe man in the woods, gandy dancer, lineman, farmer, millwright, mechanic, welder, carpenter, steelworker, dairyman, painter or mason—you'll like the easy fit, the comfort feel, the quality materials and superior tailoring of Carhartts. The Carhartt family have been making overalls for three generations. That's your guarantee of sounder values, higher quality and greater satisfaction. Look for the Car and Heart trademark. Insist on Carhartts.

HAMILTON CARHARTT OVERALL COMPANY
Established 1889
Detroit Atlanta Dallas Carhartt Park, Irvine, Ky.

MAKERS OF
Blue Denim, Brown Duck, White Sailcloth Overalls, Dungarees, Washable Work Caps

Carhartt UNION MADE OVERALLS



Dusty rode into the firelight—and the threat of a .45 Colt

TRAIL TO PIE TOWN

By JIM MAYO

Dusty Barron is a peaceful hombre — but you can't talk peace to men who know only the language of brute force!

DUSTY BARRON turned the steel-dust stallion down the slope toward the wash. He was going to have to find water soon or the horse and himself would be done for. If Emmett Fisk and Gus Mattis had shown up in the street at any other time it would have been all right.

As it was, they appeared just as he was making a break from the saloon, and they had blocked the road to the hill country and safety. Both men had reached for their guns when they saw him, and he had wheeled his horse and hit the desert road at a dead run. With Dan Hickman dead in the saloon it was

no time to argue or engage in gun pleasantries while the clan gathered.

It had been a good idea to ride to Jarilla and make peace talk, only the idea hadn't worked. Dan Hickman had called him yellow and then gone for a gun. Dan was a mite slow, a fact that had left him dead on the saloon floor.

There were nine Hickmans in Jarilla, and there were Mattis and three Fisk boys. Dusty's own tall brothers were back in the hills southwest of Jarilla, but with his road blocked he had headed the steel-dust down the trail into the basin.

The stallion had saved his bacon. No doubt about that. It was only the speed of the big desert-bred horse, and its endurance, that had got him away from town before the Hickmans could catch him. The big horse had given him lead enough until night had closed in, and after that it was easier.

Dusty had turned at right angles from his original route. They would never expect that, for the turn took him down the long slope into the vast, empty expanse of the alkali basin where no man of good sense would consider going.

For him it was the only route. At Jarilla they would be watching for him, expecting him to circle back to the hill country and his own people. He should have listened to Allie when she had told him it was useless to try to settle the old blood feud.

He had been riding now, with only a few breaks, for hours. Several times he had stopped to rest the stallion, wanting to conserve its splendid strength against what must lie ahead. And occasionally he had dismounted and walked ahead of the big horse.

DUSTY BARRON had only the vaguest idea of what he was heading into. It was thirty-eight miles across the basin, and he was heading down the basin. According to popular rumor there was no water for over eighty miles in that direction. And he had started with his canteen only half full.

For the first hour he had taken his course from a star. Then he had sighted a peak ahead and to his left, and used that for a marker. Gradually, he had worked his way toward the western side of the basin.

Somewhere over the western side was Gallo Gap, a green meadow high in the peaks off a rocky and rarely used pass. There would be water there if he could make it, yet he knew of the Gap only from a story told him by a prospector he had met one day in the hills near his home.

Daybreak found him a solitary black speck in a vast wilderness of white. The sun stabbed at him with lances of fire, and then rising higher bathed the great alkali basin in white radiance and blasting furnace heat. Dusty narrowed his eyes against the glare. It was at least twelve miles to the mountains.

He still had four miles to go through the puffing alkali dust when he saw the tracks. At first he couldn't believe the evidence of his eyes. A wagon—here!

While he allowed the steel-dust to take a blow, he dismounted and examined the tracks. It had been a heavy wagon pulled by four mules or horses. In the fine dust he could not find an outlined track to tell one from the other.

The tracks had come out of the white distance to the east and had turned north exactly on the route he was following. Gallo Gap, from the prospector's story, lay considerably north of him, and a bit to the west.

Had the driver of the wagon known of the Gap? Or had he merely turned on impulse to seek a route through the mountains. Glancing in first one and then the other direction, Dusty could see no reason why the driver should choose either direction. Jarilla lay southwest, but from here there was no indication of it, and no trail.

Mounting again, he rode on, and when he came to the edge of the low hills fronting the mountains, he detected the wagon trail running along through the scattered rocks, parched bunch grass and greasewood. It was still heading north. Yet when he studied the terrain before him he could see nothing but dancing heat waves and an occasional dust devil.

The problem of the wagon occupied his mind to forgetfulness of his own troubles. It had come across the alkali

basin from the east. That argued it must have come from the direction of Manzano unless the wagon had turned into the trail somewhere further north on the road to Conejos.

Nothing about it made sense. This was Apache country and no place for wagon travel. A man on a fast horse, yes, but even then it was foolhardy to travel alone. Yet the driver of the wagon had the courage of recklessness to come across the dead white expanse of the basin, a trip that to say the least was miserable.

Darkness was coming again, but he rode on. The wagon interested him, and with no other goal in mind now that he had escaped the Hickmans, he was curious to see who the driver was and to learn what he had in mind. Obviously, the man was a stranger to this country.

It was then, in the fading light, that he saw the mule. The steel-dust snorted and shied sharply, but Dusty kneed it closer for a better look. It had been a big mule and a fine animal, but it was dead now. It bore evidence of that brutal crossing of the basin, and here, on the far side, the animal had finally dropped dead of heat and exhaustion.

Only then did he see the trunk. It was sitting between two rocks, partly concealed. He walked over to it and looked it over. Cumbersome and heavy, it had evidently been dumped from the wagon to lighten the load. He tried to open it, but could not. It was locked tight. Beside it were a couple of chairs and a bed.

"Sheddin' his load," Dusty muttered thoughtfully. "He'd better find some water for those other mules or they'll die, too."

Then he noticed the name on the trunk. D. C. LOWE, ST. LOUIS, MO.

"You're a long way from home," Dusty remarked. He swung a leg over the saddle and rode on. He had gone almost five miles before he saw the fire.

AT FIRST, it might have been a star, but as he drew nearer he could see it was too low down, although higher than he was. The trail had been turning gradually deeper into the hills and had begun to climb a little. He rode on, using the light for a beacon.

When he was still some distance off he dismounted and tied the stallion to a clump of greasewood and walked forward on foot.

The three mules were hitched to the back of the wagon, all tied loosely, and lying down. A girl was bending over a fire, and a small boy, probably no more than nine years old, was gathering sticks of dried mesquite for fuel. There was no one else in sight.

Marveling, he returned to his horse and started back. When he was still a little distance away he began to sing. His throat was dry and it was a poor job, but he didn't want to frighten them. When he walked his horse into the firelight the boy was staring up at him, wide eyed, and girl had an old Frontier Model Colt.

"It's all right, ma'am," he said, swinging down, "I'm just a passin' stranger an' don't mean any harm."

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"Name of Dusty Barron, ma'am. I've been followin' your trail."

"Why?" Her voice was sharp and a little frightened. She could have been no more than seventeen or eighteen.

"Mostly because I was headed thisaway an' was wonderin' what anybody was doin' down here with a wagon, or where you might be headed."

"Doesn't this lead us anywhere?" she asked.

"Ma'am," Dusty replied, "if you're lookin' for a settlement there ain't none thisaway in less'n a hundred miles. There's a sort of town then, place they call Pie Town."

"But where did you come from?" Her eyes were wide and dark. If she was fixed up, he reflected, she would be right pretty.

"Place they call Jarilla," he said, "but I reckon this was a better way if you're travellin' alone. Jarilla's a Hickman town, an' they sure are a no-account lot."

"My father died," she told him, putting the gun in a holster hung to the wagon bed, "back there. Billy an' I buried him."

"You come across the basin alone?" He was incredulous.

"Yes. Father died in the mountains

on the other side. That was three days ago."

Dusty removed his hat and began to strip the saddle and bridle from the stallion while the girl bent over her cooking. He found a hunk of bacon in his saddle pockets. "Got plenty of bacon?" he asked. "I most generally pack a mite along."

She looked up, brushing a strand of hair away from her face. She was flushed from the fire. "We haven't had any bacon for a week." She looked away quickly, and her chin quivered a little, then became stubborn. "Nor much of anything else, but you're welcome to join us."

He seated himself on the ground and leaned back on his saddle while she dished up the food. It wasn't much. A few dry beans and some corn bread. "You got some relatives out here somewheres?"

"No," she handed him a plate, but he was too thirsty to eat more than a few mouthfuls. "Father had a place out here. His lungs were bad and they told him the dry air would be good for him. My mother died when Billy was born, so there was nothing to keep us back in Missouri. We just headed west."

"You say your father had a place? Where is it?"

"I'm not sure. Father loaned some man some money, or rather, he provided him with money with which to buy stock. The man was to come west and settle on a place, stock it, and then send for dad."

Dusty ate slowly, thinking that over. "Got anything to show for it?"

"Yes, father had an agreement that was drawn up and notarized. It's in a leather wallet. He gave the man five thousand dollars. It was all we had."

When they had eaten, the girl and boy went to sleep in the wagon box while Dusty stretched out on the ground nearby. "What a mess!" he told himself. "Those kids comin' away out here, all by themselves now, an' the chances are that money was blowed in over a faro layout long ago!"

IN THE morning Dusty hitched up the mules for them. "You foller me," he advised, and turned the stallion up the trail to the north.

It was almost noon before he saw the thumblike butte that marked the entrance to Gallo Gap. He turned toward it, riding ahead to scout the best trail, and at times dismounting to roll rocks aside so the wagon could get through.

Surmounting the crest of a low hill, he looked suddenly into Gallo Gap. His red-rimmed eyes stared greedily at the green grass and trees. The stallion smelled water and wanted to keep going, so waving the wagon on, he rode down into the Gap.

Probably there were no more than two hundred acres here, but it was waist deep in rich green grass, and the towering yellow pines were tall and very old. It was like riding from desolation into a beautiful park. He found the spring by the sound of running water, crystal clear and beautiful, the water rippling over the rocks to fall into a clear pond at least an acre in extent. Nearby space had been cleared for a cabin, then abandoned.

Dusty turned in the saddle as his horse stood knee deep in the water. The wagon pulled up. "This is a little bit of heaven!" he said, grinning at the girl. "Say, what's your name, anyway?"

"Ruth Grant," she said, shyly.

All the weariness seemed to have fled from her face at the sight of the water and trees. She smiled gaily, and a few minutes later as he walked toward the trees with a rifle in the crook of his elbow he heard laughter, and then her voice, singing. He stopped suddenly, watching some deer, feeding a short distance off, and listening to her voice. It made a lump of loneliness rise in his throat.

That night after they had eaten steaks from a fat buck he'd killed, their first good meal in days, he looked across the fire at her. "Ruth," he said, "I think I'll locate me a home right here. I've been lookin' for a place of my own.

"I reckon what we better do is for you all to stay here with me until you get rested up. I'll build a cabin, and those mules of yours can get some meat on their bones again. Then I'll ride on down to Pie Town and locate this hombre your father had dealin's with,

an' see how things look."

That was the way they left it, but in the days that followed Dusty Barron had never been happier. He felled trees on the mountain side and built a cabin, and in working around he found ways of doing things he had never tried before. Ruth was full of suggestions about the house, sensible, knowing things that helped a lot. He worked the mules a little, using only one at a time and taking them turn about.

He hunted a good deal for food. Nearby he found a salt lick and shot an occasional antelope, and several times, using a shot-gun from the wagon, he killed blue grouse. In a grove of trees he found some ripe black cherries similar to those growing wild in the Guadalupe Mountains of West Texas. There was also some Mexican plum.

When the cabin was up and there was plenty of meat on hand he got his gear in shape. Then he carefully oiled and cleaned his guns.

Ruth noticed them, and her face paled a little. "You believe there will be trouble?" she asked quickly. "I don't want you to—"

"Forget it," he interrupted. "I've got troubles of my own." He explained about the killing of Dan Hickman and the long standing feud between the families."

He left at daybreak. In his pocket he carried the leather wallet containing the agreement Roger Grant had made with Dick Lowe. It was a good day's ride from Gallo Gap to Aimless Creek where Dusty camped the first night. The following day he rode on into Pie Town. From his talks with Ruth he knew something of Lowe, and enough of the probable location of the ranch, if there was one.

A COWHAND with sandy hair and crossed eyes was seated on the top rail of the corral. Dusty reined in and leaned his forearm on the saddle-horn and dug for the makings. After he had rolled a smoke he pass them on to the cross-eyed rider.

"Know anything about an' hombre name of Dick Lowe?" he asked.

"Reckon so." They shared a match, and looking at each other through the smoke decided they were men of a kind. "He's up there in the Spur Saloon now."

Dusty made no move. After a few drags on the cigarette, he glanced at the fire end. "What kind of hombre is he?"

"Salty." The cowhand puffed for a moment on his cigarette. "Salty, an' mean. Plumb poison with a shootin' iron, an' when you ride for him, he pays you what he wants to when you quit. If you don't think you got a square deal you can always tell him so, but when you do you better reach."

"Like that, huh?"

"Like that." He smoked quietly for a few minutes. "Four hombres haven't liked what he paid 'em. He buried all four of 'em in his own personal boot-hill, off to the north of the ranch-house."

"Sounds bad. Do all his own work or does he have help?"

"He's got help. Cat McQuill an' Bugle Nose Bnder. Only nobody calls him Bugle Nose to his face."

"What about the ranch? Nice place?"

"Best around here. He come in here with money, had near five thousand dollar. He bought plenty of cattle an' stocked his range well."

The cross-eyed cowhand looked at him, squinting through the smoke. "My name's Blue Riddle. I rode for him once."

"I take it you didn't argue none," Barron said, grinning.

"My maw never raised no foolish children!" Riddle replied wryly. "They had me in a cross fire. Been Lowe alone, I'd maybe of took a chance, but as it was, they would have cut me down quick. So I come away, but I'm stickin' around, just waiting. I told him I aimed to have my money, an' he just laughed."

Dusty dropped his hand back and loosened his left-hand gun. Then he swung his leg back over the saddle and thrust his toe in the stirrup. "Well," he said, "I got papers here that say I speak for a gal that owns half his layout. I'm goin' up an' lay claim to it for her."

Riddle looked up cynically. "Why not shoot yourself and save the trouble? They'll gun you down."

Then he sized Barron up again.

"What did you say your name was?"

Dusty grinned. "I didn't say, but its Dusty Barron."

Blue Riddle slid off the corral rail. "One of the Barron's from Castle Rock?" He grinned again. "This I gotta see!" . . .

Dusty was looking for a big man, but Dick Lowe, whom he spotted at once on entering the saloon, was only a bit larger than himself, and he was the only small man among the Barrons.

Lowe turned to look at him as he entered. The mans' features were sharp, and his quick eyes glanced from Dusty Barron to Riddle, then back again. Dusty walked to the bar, and Riddle loitered near the door.

The man standing beside Lowe at the bar must be Cat McQuill. The reason for the nickname was obvious for there was something feline about the man's facial appearance.

"Lowe?" Dusty inquired.

"That's right," Lowe turned toward him slowly, "something you want?"

"Yeah," Dusty leaned nonchalantly on the bar and ordered a drink. "I'm representin' your partner."

Dick Lowe's face blanched, then turned hard as stone. His eyes glinted. However, he managed a smile with his thin lips. "Partner? I have no partner."

Dusty leaned on the bar watching his drink poured. He took his time.

LOWE watched him, slowly growing more and more angry. "Well," he said sharply, "if you've got something to say, say it!"

Dusty looked around, simulating surprise. "Why, I was just givin' you time to remember, Lowe! You can't tell me you can draw up an agreement with a man, have it properly notarized, and then take five thousand dollars of his money to stock a ranch and not remember it!"

Dusty was pointedly speaking loudly and the fact angered Lowe. "You have such an agreement?" Lowe demanded.

"Sure I got it."

"Where's the party this supposed agreement belongs to? Why doesn't he speak for himself?"

"He's dead. He was a lunger an' died on his way west."

Lowe's relief was evident. "I'm afraid," he said, "that this is all too obvious an attempt to get some money out of me. It won't work."

"It's nothing of the kind. Grant's dead, but he left a daughter and a son. I aim to see they get what belongs to 'em, Mr. Lowe. I hope we can do it right peaceable."

Lowe's face tightened, but he forced a smile. He was aware he had enemies in Pie Town and did not relish their overhearing this conversation. He was also aware that it was pretty generally known that he had come into Pie Town with five thousand in cash and brought cattle when everyone on the range was impoverished.

"I reckon this'll be easy settled," he said. "You bring the agreement to the ranch, an' if it's all legal I reckon we can make a deal."

"Sure!" Dusty agreed. "See you tomorrow!"

On the plank steps of the hotel he waited until Riddle caught up with him. "You ain't actually goin' out there, are you?" Blue demanded. "That's just askin' for trouble!"

"I'm goin' out," Dusty agreed. "I want a look at the ranch myself. If I can ride out there I can get an idea what kind of stock he's got and what shape the ranch is in. I've got a hunch if we make a cash settlement Lowe isn't goin' to give us much more chance to look around if he can help it.

"Besides, I've talked in front o' the folks here in town, and rough as some of them may be they ain't goin' to see no orphans get gypped. No Western crowd would stand for that unless it's some outlaws like Lowe and his two pals."

Riddle walked slowly away shaking his head with doubt. Dusty watched him go and then went on inside.

He was throwing a saddle on the steel-dust next morning when he heard a low groan. Gun in hand he walked around the corner of the corral. Beyond a pile of poles he saw Blue Riddle pulling himself off the ground. "What happened?" Dusty demanded.

"Bender an' McQuill. They gave me my walkin' papers. Said I'd been in

town too long, which didn't bother Lowe none till I took up with you. They gave me till daybreak to pull my freight."

He staggered erect, holding a hand to his head. "Then Bender bent a gun over my noggin."

Barron's eyes narrowed. "Play rough, don't they?" He looked at Riddle. "What are you goin' to do?"

"You don't see me out here runnin' down the road, do you?" Riddle said. "I'm sittin' tight!"

"Wash your face off, then," Dusty suggested, "an' we'll eat!"

"You go ahead," Riddle replied. "I'll be along."

Dusty glanced back over his shoulder as he left and saw Blue Riddle hiking toward the Indian huts that clustered outside of Pie Town.

WHEN he rode out of town an hour later Dusty Barron was not feeling overly optimistic. Riddle had stayed behind only at Dusty's insistence, but now that Dusty was headed toward Lowe's ranch he no longer felt so confident. Dick Lowe was not a man to give up easily, nor to yield his ranch or any part of it without a fight. The pistol whipping of Riddle had been ample evidence of the lengths to which he was prepared to go.

The range through which Dusty rode was good. This was what he had wanted to see. How they might have bargained in town he was not sure. He doubted if anyone there would interfere if a deal was made by him. It was his own problem to see that Ruth and Billy Grant got a fair deal, and that could not be done unless he knew something, at least, of the ranch and the stock.

Dusty was quite sure now that Lowe had never expected the consumptive Roger Grant to come west and claim his piece of the ranch. Nor had he planned to give it to him if he had. He knew very well that he, himself, was riding into the lion's mouth, but felt he could depend on his own abilities and that Lowe would not go too far after his talk before the bystanders who had been in the saloon. By now Lowe would know that the story would be known to all his enemies in Pie Town.

Cat McQuill was loafing on the steps when Dusty rode up, and the gunman's eyes gleamed with triumph at seeing him. "Howdy!" he said affably. "Come on in! The boss is waitin' for you!"

Bugle Nose Bender was leaning against the fireplace and Lowe was seated at his desk. "Here he is, Boss!" McQuill said as they entered.

Lowe glanced up sharply. "Where's the agreement?" he asked, holding out his hand.

Barron handed it to him, and the rancher opened it, took a quick look, then glanced up. "This is it, Cat!"

Too late Dusty heard the slide of gun on leather, and whirled to face McQuill, but the pistol barrel crashed down over the side of his head and he hit the floor. Even as he fell he realized what a fool he had been, yet he had been so sure they would talk a little, at least, try to run a blazer or to buy him off cheap.

Bender lunged toward him and kicked him in the ribs, then Lowe reached over and jerking him to his knees, struck him three times in the face. The pistol barrel descended again and drove him down into a sea of blackness.

How long they had pounded him he had no idea. When he opened his eyes, he struggled, fighting his way to realization of where he was. It took him several minutes to understand that he was almost standing on his head in the road, one foot caught in the stallion's stirrup!

The steel-dust, true to his training, was standing rigid in the road, his head turned to look at his master. "Easy boy!" Dusty groaned. "Easy does it!" Twisting his foot in the stirrup, he tried to free it, but to no avail.

He realized what they had planned. After beating him they had brought him out here, wedged his foot in the stirrup, struck the horse and when he started to move, had ridden hastily away before they could be seen. Most horses, frightened by the unfamiliar burden in the stirrup, would have raced away over the desert and dragged him to death. In fact, it had happened to more than one unwary cowhand.

They had reckoned without the steel-dust. The stallion had been reared by Dusty Barron from a tiny colt, and the

two had never been long apart. The big horse knew instantly that something was radically wrong, and had gone only a little way, then stopped. His long training told him to stand, and he stood stock still.

Dusty twisted his foot again but couldn't get loose. Nor could he pull himself up and get hold of the stirrup and so into the saddle. He was still trying this when hoof-beats sounded on the road.

He looked around wildly, fearful of Lowe's return. Then a wave of relief went over him. It was Blue Riddle!

"Hey!" Blue exclaimed. "What the heck happened?" He swung down from his horse and hastily extricated Dusty from his predicament.

Barron explained. "They wanted me killed so it would look like I was dragged to death! Lucky they got away from here in a hurry, afraid they might be seen!"

"But they got the agreement!" Riddle protested.

"Uh uh." Barron grinned, then gasped as his bruised face twinged with pain. "That was a copy. I put the agreement down an' traced over it. He took a quick look and thought it was the real thing. Now we got to get to town before he realizes what happened."

DESPITE his battered and bruised body and the throbbing of his face, Dusty crawled into the saddle and they raced up the road to Pie Town.

Two men were standing on the hotel porch as they rode up. One of them glanced at Dusty Barron. "Howdy. Young woman inside wants to see you."

Dusty rushed into the lobby and stopped in surprised. Facing him was Ruth Grant, holding Billy by the hand, but her smile fled when she saw his face. "Oh!" she cried. "What's happened to you?"

Briefly, he explained. Then demanded, "How'd you get here?"

"After you left," Ruth told him, "I was worried. After father's death and the trouble we had before you came there was no time to think of anything, and I had to always be thinking of where we would go and what we would do. Then I remembered a comment father made once.

"You see, Mr. Lowe left a trunk with us to bring west or send to him later. It wasn't quite full, so father opened it to pack some other things in it. He found something there that worried him a great deal, and he told me several times that he was afraid he might have trouble when we got out here.

"From all he said I had an idea what he found, so after you were gone we searched through the trunk and found some letters and a hand bill offering a five thousand dollar reward for Lowe. Why he kept them I can't imagine, but the sheriff says some criminals are very vain, and often keep such things about themselves."

"And then you rode on here?"

She nodded. "We met two men who were trailing you, and as they had extra horses with them so they could travel fast, we joined them."

Dusty's face tightened. "Men looking for me?"

Riddle interrupted. "Dick Lowe's ridin' into town now!"

Dusty Barron turned, loosening his guns. He started for the door.

"I'm in on this, too!" Riddle said, trailing him.

They walked out on the porch and stepped down into the street, spreading apart. Dick Lowe and his two henchmen had dismounted and were starting into the saloon when something made them glance up the street.

"Lowe!" Dusty yelled. "You tried to kill me, an' I'm comin' for you!"

Dick Lowe's hard face twisted with fury as he wheeled, stepping down into the dust.

He stopped in the street, and Cat McQuill and Bender moved out to either side.

Dusty Barron walked steadily down the street, his eyes on Dick Lowe. All three men were dangerous, but Lowe was the man he wanted, and Lowe was the man he intended to get first.

"This man's an outlaw!" he said, speaking to Bender and McQuill. "He's wanted for murder in St. Louis! If you want out, get out now!"

"You're lying!" Bender snarled.

Dusty Barron walked on. The sun was bright in the street, and little puffs

of dust arose at every step. There were five horses tied to the hitch-rail behind the three men. He found himself hoping none of them would be hit by a stray shot. To his right was Blue Riddle, walking even with him, his big hands hovering over his guns.

HIS eyes clung to Dick Lowe, riveted there as though he alone lived in the world. He could see the man drop into a half-crouch, noticed the bulge of the tobacco sack in his breast pocket, the buttons down the two sides of his shirt. Under the brim of the hat he could see the straight bar of the man's eyebrows, and the hard gleam of the eyes beneath, and then suddenly the whole tableau dissolved into flaming, shattering action.

Lowe's hand flashed for his gun and Dusty's beat him by a hair's breadth, but Dusty held his fire, lifting the gun slowly. Lowe's quick shot flamed by his ear, and he winced inwardly at the proximity of death. Then the gunman fired again and the bullet tugged impatiently at his vest. He drew a long breath and squeezed off a shot, then another.

Lowe rose on tip-toes, opened his mouth wide as if to gasp for breath, and seemed to hold himself there for a long moment, then pitched over into the street.

Dusty's gun swung with his eyes and he saw Bender was down on his knees and so he opened up on McQuill. The Cat man jerked convulsively, then began to back away, his mouth working and his gun hammering. The man's gun stopped firing, and he stared at it, pulled the trigger again, and then reached for a cartridge from his belt.

Barron stood spraddle legged in the street and saw Cat's hand fumble at his belt. The fingers came out with a cartridge and moved toward the gun, and then his eyes glazed and he dropped his iron. Turning, as though the whole affair had slipped his mind, he started for the saloon. He made three steps, then lifted his foot, seemed to feel for the saloon step, then fell like a log across the rough board porch.

Blue Riddle was on his knees, blood staining a trouser leg. Bender was sprawled out in the dust, a darkening pool forming beneath him.

Suddenly the street was filled with people. Ruth ran up to Dusty and he slid his arm around her. With a shock, he remembered. "You said two men were looking for me. Who?"

"Only us."

He turned, staring. Two big men were facing him, grinning. "Buck and Ben! How in tarnation did you two find me?"

Buck Barron grinned. "We was wonderin' what happened to you. We come to town and had a mite of a ruckus with the Hickmans. What was left of them headed for El Paso in a mighty hurry —both of 'em.

"Then an Injun kid come ridin' up on a beat-up hoss and said you all was in a sight of trouble so we figgered we'd come along and see how you made out."

"An Injun?" Dusty was puzzled.

"Yeah," Riddle told him, "that was my doin'. I figgered you was headed for trouble, so I sent an Injun kid off after your brothers. Heck, if I'd knowed what you was like with a six-gun I'd never have sent for 'em!"

Ben Barron grinned and rubbed at the stubble of whiskers. "An' if we'd knowed there was on'y three, we'd never have come!" He looked from Dusty to Ruth. "Don't look like you'd be comin' home right soon with that place at Gallo Gap an' what you've got your arm around. But what'll we tell Allie?"

"Allie?" Ruth drew away from him, eyes wide. "Who's Allie? You didn't tell me you had a girl!"

Dusty winked at his brothers. "Allie? She's war chief of the Barron tribe! Allie's my ma!"

He turned to Riddle. "Blue, how's about you sort of keepin' an eye on that Gap place for me for a week or so? I reckon I'd better take Ruth home for a spell. Allie, she sure sets a sight of store by weddin's!"

Ruth's answering pressure on his arm was all the answer he needed.

●

Read Our Companion Magazine THRILLING WESTERN — 15c At All Stands!

Death Valley Desert Rat

By JOHN A. THOMPSON

Meet prospector Tyler Barrett, one of the few remaining old-timers in the hottest and lowest spot in the West!

TYLER BARRETT, one of the last of the old-time desert rats, spent most of his life in and around Death Valley. He was a prospector, but as far as I know he never got rich.

Yet for all his patched pants, held up by some black magic and a piece of rope tied loosely around his middle, his scuffed shoes and his long-sleeved undershirt—way past being merely tattletale gray—Ty was one of the happiest men I ever knew. Perhaps it was because he lived in a world of his own choosing, a place of golden dreams that never faded.

Desolate, rich in minerals, fantastically landscaped Death Valley is one of the hottest spots on the North American continent—and one of the driest. It is also the lowest land area in the entire Western Hemisphere. More than 500 square miles of the valley are below sea level. Badwater is 280 feet below.

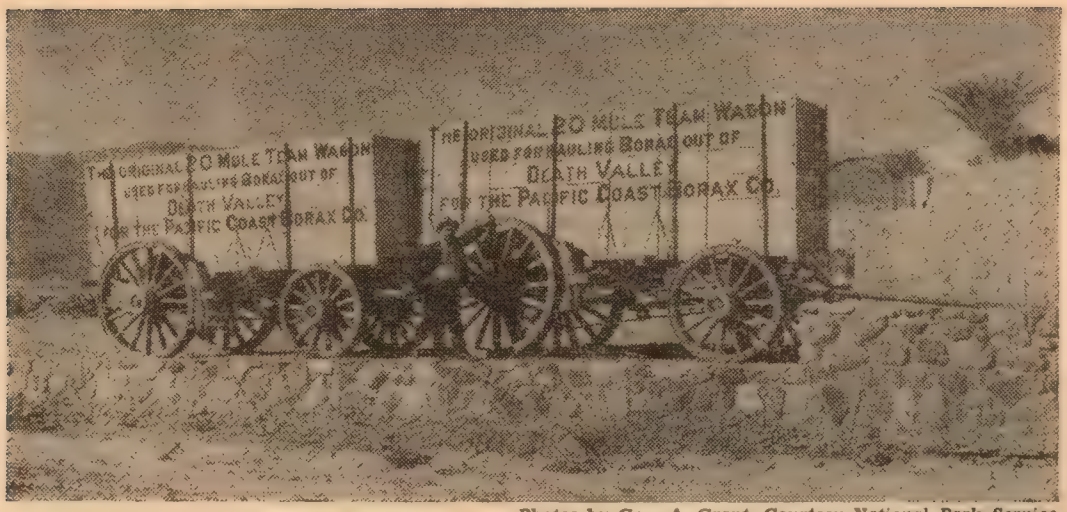
This queer slice of Dante's Inferno which Barrett chose to call home is about 140 miles long and from four to sixteen miles wide. Hidden in the vast desert country of southern California back close to the Nevada line, the valley is hemmed in on both sides by steep, incredibly high mountain chains, the towering Panamints on the west, the forbidding Grapevine, Funeral and Black ranges on the east.

Glistening salt beds spread over the valley floor. White sand fills the canyons at the base of the mountains. Higher up great spires and ramparts of raw, precipitous rock rise toward the blazing, cloudless sky.

Mighty Hot Place

Summer temperatures of 134° in the shade have been recorded. It gets hotter in exposed portions of the valley floor.

THE VALLEY NAMED "DEATH"—If you looked out from Wildrose Canyon, in Death Valley National Monument, California, you'd see—says the National Park Service, which administers the area—these peaks of the High Sierras, including Mt. Whitney, highest in the country.



Photos by Geo. A. Grant, Courtesy National Park Service

Two of the original Twenty-Mule Team Borax wagons

"Why many's the summer evenin' I've set in my cabin with the door open," Ty used to insist, "and watched a coyote chasin' a rabbit acrost the desert, and they was both walkin'. Out here in Death Valley it ain't the hoomidity that gits yuh. It's the heat."

The first time I encountered Tyler Barrett was years ago, quite a few years before Death Valley became a National Monument under the care and jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Not so many tourists were scurrying like crazy over the blacktop roads, or plunging into the cool pool at the swanky Furnace Creek Inn, or playing golf on its all grass golf course. Still, even in those days, with care and a jaloppy in good mechanical condition, a fellow could drive into or through Death Valley provided he understood desert driving and carried extra water, oil and gas along.

Crossing the southern California desert east from Los Angeles, I drove out past Trona and the little mining town of Ballarat, choosing a back entrance to Death Valley—the narrow, winding road that follows Wildrose Canyon up the west slope of the Panamints. The road goes to Harrisburg, but my immediate destination before turning north into Emigrant Canyon and dropping into the valley by way of Townes Pass, was the ghost town of Skidoo.

The remnants of this once high-flying boom gold camp that housed between 500 and 1000 people in its heyday and produced some $3,000,000 in gold lie in the mountains a few miles above Harrisburg. Though the boom was long since over, there were, and still are, quite a few active mines and prospects scattered all through this section of the Panamint Mountains.

Barrett happened to be in Skidoo. The old prospector walked into my camp just as I was finishing breakfast the morning after my first night alone in the eerie ghost town.

A small man, bat-eared, leather-skinned and with a gray stubble of beard covering his chin, he at first offered me a wary welcome to the place, declining any chow or even a cup of coffee. What broke him down were some old Los Angeles newspapers and some magazines I had in the car.

The Desert Rat Speaks

Pretty soon we were squatting side by side on the running-board, the one that was in the shade, and swapping mine talk like a couple of old cronies. Barrett sat

on the newspapers and magazines, more to keep them safe than for any cushioning effect they might have on his thin, bony flanks.

"Shucks, there's still canyons in the Death Valley mountains that's never been prospected," declared Barrett, his creased, red-rimmed eyes squinting into the distance. "You can go up to Aguereberry Point here in the Panamints, look out over the valley below and see more canyons in the mountains than a yaller dog has fleas.

The sand dunes near Stovepipe Wells

A lot o' them canyons yuh can't climb from below an' yuh can't drop into 'em from on top. The rock walls is too steep. But there may be millions in gold in some of 'em, could a feller figure out how to reach it."

Barrett shrugged. "It's a fascinatin' problem, once yuh get to thinkin' about it. Still I reckon the valley was here a long time before them first poor Jayhawkers stumbled into it, and it'll be here, gold and all, long after the last of us desert rats is gone."

Barrett's reference to the Jayhawkers meant the tragic band of emigrant gold-seekers who, lost and bewildered on what they had supposed to be a short cut to California's bonanza goldfields further north, reached Death Valley in 1849. They were the first Americans to discover the place.

Luckless Jayhawkers

Hungry, thirsty, wearied by the thousands of miles of arduous trail they had followed from the East, the luckless wagon train found the hard, salt floor of the valley and the steep apparently passless wall of the Panamints a veritable death trap. Many members of the party, men, women and children alike succumbed to thirst and starvation as they fought their way blindly to get out of the horrible, heat-blazing pit.

Only by the heroic, almost superhuman efforts of Manly and Rogers, two members of one of the smaller parties into which the wagon train broke up, were a pitifully small number of the ill-fated emigrants finally rescued and led to the crest of the Panamints, and from there on to the Pacific Coast and safety.

As the tiny band of emaciated survivors reached the top of the mountain wall, they paused for one last look backward at the burning basin that had caused them so much misery and suffering. Almost in unison they raised their tired voices.

"Good-by, Death Valley!"

Lost Gunsight Mine

It was their last bitter farewell to a place they never wanted to see again. The name stuck. It's been Death Valley ever since, though before it was rechristened the few Indians who had lived there for centuries called it "Tomesha," or Ground Afire.

Barrett knew a lot about the Jayhawkers, from hearsay, what older Indians had told him in his youth and what he had read in books.

"Studied up on it a heap," he confided. "Had to. Yuh see there ain't no use moonin' about the gold in them canyons yuh can't reach. It ain't practical. It'd worry a feller into an early grave.

"I allus look at them things from a logical viewpoint. What's bin found once kin be reached. Stands to reason, don't it? An' if yuh look in the right spot it kin be found again. Yes sir, when I find the place I'll have me all the treasure in the lost Gunsight Mine. Not gold, but silver, mister. And the mine's so rich yuh can dig the pure silver outa' the vein with a pocketknife."

"Been looking for it long?" I asked.

"Close to forty years," answered Barrett. "But they passed quick. Time don't hang heavy on a feller's hands when he's got a bonanza like the lost Gunsight jest around the corner."

The old man must have seen the astonishment in my eyes, and misunderstood its cause. "That mine ain't around here though," he added almost gruffly. "I'll swear that on a stack o' Bibles."

So would I. But I didn't tell Barrett.

Interesting History

After all the Lost Gunsight mine has played a very real and considerable part in the history of Death Valley—particularly the early history. And fact or fancy, legend, or real as taxes, here was a man who had put in forty years in one of the toughest spots in the desert country trying to track down to its supposed solid silver source, a story that originated back when the first party of emigrants got lost in Death Valley.

It is quite possible that if one of the emigrants hadn't broken his gunsight and if he hadn't replaced it with a malleable bit of makeshift shiny metal which he dug out of a vein crevice in the rocks in some unnamed mountain canyon, it would have been a long, long time following the Jayhawker party's unhappy experience before any Americans again had the curiosity or the temerity to venture back to Death Valley. History, in little things as well as big, hinges on a multitude of ifs.

Pure Silver

It wasn't until this particular emigrant finally reached one of the California mining settlements still carrying his gun, with the makeshift sight on it, that he learned the metal he had gouged out of the rocks in Death Valley was pure silver. Such a thing is bound to attract attention, even in a gold camp. And such a story is bound to spread, with variations added by time and the constant retelling.

Those who have gone more than superficially into the background of the Lost Gunsight mine declare that one of the variations was in crediting the silver-patched gun to different members of the emigrant party. Several names appear in the various versions. But there seems to be real evidence to support the fact that one of the emigrants did show several bits of pure silver—Death Valley silver—to the gold miners in some of the booming gold camps of the Mother Lode.

So at least the silver occurrence has always appeared to have a sound basis in fact. Certainly reasonable mining men who plunged into the valley in search of the Lost Gunsight, closer to the actual time of the stories would not have done so had they regarded the thing as a phoney.

The big puzzle that plagued Barrett, as it has all other searchers for the famed Lost Gunsight mine before and since, was one of approximate location. Most of the early stories placed the site of the mine on the western side of the valley, more than likely in one of the canyons of the Panamints through which the starving, thirst-crazed Jayhawkers had struggled. Which slope of the Panamints, the eastern valley side or the westward side is a moot question.

Yet the mountain range seemed pretty well identified. By painstakingly re-tracing the original route of the Jayhawkers, and carefully prospecting both main and side canyons, a fellow ought to have at least a fighting chance of re-locating that once found and never again encountered silver treasure.

Regular Bonanza

Unfortunately later stories, including that of the Jayhawker whose actual possession of small peices of virgin silver has been well substantiated definitely put the discovery somewhere down the west slope of the Funeral mountains clear across on the Nevada or west side of Death Valley.

Tyler Barrett had tackled both those two widely separated general areas.

"Had to," he said, "an' the confusin' part of it is I ain't certain shore yet which side o' the danged valley them millions o' dollars in silver is lyin' on waitin' fer me to come an' claim 'em.

"There's silver in the Panamints—a little lead and gold and copper too. I've run onto leads, and staked a few claims. Sold 'em mostly for what I could get, a few hundred here and there, now and then a thousand or two. I wasn't much interested. They wasn't that bonanza lode of the Lost Gunsight."

Barrett shifted his seat on the running-board. "The French party come back to look for the Lost Gunsight in 1860. They tried the ranges on both sides o' the valley. Havin' first-hand dope at the time, I figure they knew what they was doin'."

There was logic in Barrett's reasoning. The French party was close enough in point of time to the actual Gunsight find to be able to gather from actual participants and Jayhawker survivors all the stories of the silver discovery.

Moreover by 1860, the year the French expedition left for Death Valley, California miners and mining men, formerly interested primarily in gold, had suddenly become acutely silver conscious. The great Comstock silver lode at Virginia City, Nevada, was roaring into boom production and holding out its later amply fulfilled promise of millions of dollars in white metal.

A Vain Search

Dr. Darwin French, after much study, thought enough of the story's basic authenticity to organize a party of miners and solid citizens in Oroville, California to go out in search of the Lost Gunsight mine. With horses and pack mules for their supplies, they made their way into the dread confines of Death Valley. Unfortunately they chose the summertime for their expedition.

In spite of all the location evidence they had gathered, the French party discovered, as has everyone else who has since sought the mysterious missing lode, that the vein of pure silver could be in any canyon within a hundred square miles in what is perhaps the most rugged desert country in the whole Southwest. And it could be anywhere within a vertical range of two miles straight up and down from the small canyons near the mountain peaks to the sand-blocked larger canyon mouths spilling onto the desert floor thousands of feet below.

French failed to find the Lost Gunsight. Instead, in the burning heat of a Death Valley summer, he and his associates encountered almost as much suffering, thirst and hardship as had the Jayhawkers ten years earlier. In the end the silver seekers were glad to get out of the Valley alive.

In their desperate wanderings, however, they had explored for the first time many sections of the country, discovering several important springs and giving their present names to many of Death Valley's prominent landmarks. For instance the amazing waterfalls known as Darwin Falls that lie just off today's excellent Townes Pass highway, Furnace creek, and Bennett's Well where some of the Jayhawkers originally camped.

Boom Towns

French's failure to locate the Lost Gunsight merely created more interest in the missing silver lode, and in Death Valley as well. He and his party had hardly returned to civilization before other expeditions began tackling the region in the same quest. None found the famous silver treasure, but some of them did find deposits of lead and silver in the high mountains that rimmed the valley. Other prospectors found antimony. A few found gold.

As the years wore on mines were opened up here and there, indisputable evidence that the Death Valley country was potentially rich in minerals. The Lost Gunsight's existence, if someone could only find it, was thus further corroborated by these constant proofs of metal deposits in the general area.

In time boom camps sprang up like Harrisburg and Skidoo, and Greenwater over in the Black mountains on the eastern side of the valley. For a while Greenwater promised to be a seventh wonder of the world as a multi-million dollar desert copper town. Then it faded practically overnight.

Other boom towns were Bullfrog and Rhyolite, the bonanza gold camp in Nevada just east of Death Valley.

Each of these helldorado towns had their day in the blazing desert sun, their saloons, honky-tonks, gunplay, sudden killings—and spectacular discoveries of rich ore.

Then as the ore gave out, or failed to live up to expectations they dwindled into ghost towns as rapidly as they had mushroomed into being in the first place. Yet each added its share of publicity to the Death Valley country, and a fillip to the general interest in that weird and strangely fascinating section of the desert.

Borax!

And boom towns or no, there was always in the heart of the desert rats that prospected there year in and year out, the persistent story of the Lost Gunsight mine with its fabulous wealth in virgin silver. There was always someone—sometimes a lone individual like Barrett, sometimes a well-financed expedition from the outside—going quietly and often secretly about the business of looking for that fabulous lost lode.

These fellows checked and re-checked the old records and the earlier stories. They traced and re-traced the possible routes of the Jayhawkers, seeking the keystone clue that would finally lead them to the Lost Gunsight. When one generation of searchers gave up, or died off, another pushed into the desert to take its place.

"The queer part about it all," smiled Barrett, "is that for all the gold and silver mines that's been found an' worked an' abandoned in Death Valley, the mineral that's produced most wealth here ain't no shinin' metal at all. It's borax, white an' glistenin' an' strung out acrost the desert floor.

"Borax made millions for men like W. T. Coleman and F. M. Smith. It put Death Valley soundly on the minin' map, and a pitchur of the old Harmony Borax works' famous twenty-mule teams in nearly every home in the country."

For roughly fifty years borax was king in Death Valley. It brought the first real roads into the country, and a railroad branch line into the valley itself. It brought guests and sightseers, as well as solid business into the region.

New Deposits

Strictly utilitarian, this humble mineral used in the glass and pottery industries, in welding and brazing, in medicine and as a flux in various metallurgical processes made more money and more jobs in Death Valley than all the other more spectacular precious metal finds combined. And it would still be doing it had not a new source of borax, known as razorite, been discovered in huge quantities in the Mohave desert near Kramer about 1926.

The new deposits, easier to mine and handle, and nearer to main line transportation, caused Death Valley's borax industry to collapse with the suddenness of a struck tent. Death Valley returned to its intermittent metal mines, its desert rats and their search for a sudden bonanza; to some winter tourists, and Tyler Barrett who kept on looking for the Lost Gunsight mine.

Ty and I were fast friends by the time I left Skidoo. I took him with me part way through Emigrant Canyon when I set out finally for the Townes Pass road and let him out of the car at a bleak spot in the Panamints.

"This ain't the place," he said with a queer mixture of frankness and yet unstilled suspicion, "but there's a canyon I ain't looked over near here— Anyhow if I find it, look me up when I'm a millionaire an' I'll give yuh a little sample of the ore fer a keepsake—a piece o' the virgin silver Gunsight lode."

I said I would. Glancing up in my rear-view windshield mirror, I saw that Barrett had sat down on a roadside boulder and was watching the car determined not to move until he was satisfied both car and I were out of sight.

Hope Springs Eternal—

The next time I met Barrett was several years later, after 1933. Death Valley had been made into a National Monument, and I wanted to see how the valley was getting on under Park Service administration. At noontime I had parked near the old Salt Creek crossing where the Jayhawkers first stopped when they turned their covered wagons and starving oxen northward from the mouth of Furnace Creek wash.

The crossing lies just a little way from the present east-west highway between Daylight Pass and Townes Pass. A group of men, park officials and laborers, were working with nets at the brackish waters of the creek.

They quit for lunch and one of the workers spotting me came over to the car. It was Tyler Barrett, as bronzed as ever but looking a little older, a little more stoop-shouldered than I had remembered him. Aside from that he might have been wearing the same tattered pants, scuffed shoes, and long-sleeved gray shirt as when I met him years before.

Barrett called me by name. "Sorry I ain't got to give yuh that sample of the Lost Gunsight vein yet," he said. "I'm workin' fer the Gov'mint now. Gettin' me up a little grubstake, an' doggone it yuh learn somethin' new 'bout the valley every day. Know what we're doin'?" I didn't.

"Seinin' fer fish. Fish in Death Valley! Say, that's crazier'n hunting the Lost Gunsight, ain't it?" Barrett chuckled. "Worst of it is, them scientist fellers found some. Two varieties o' 'desert sardines'—here and down at Saratoga Springs. Shucks if I ever told that along with the piece about them walkin' coyotes and rabbits, folks sure as shootin' would call me a liar."

Barrett settled down to enjoy his paper bag sandwich lunch with me. His 'sandwiches' consisted of outsize soggy flapjacks folded in half over a generous filling of cold boiled red kidney beans. He ate them with gusto, and no evident fear of indigestion. As far as Ty was concerned, indigestion was a purely city ailment, something that came from a man pampering his innards with too many fancy victuals.

The season was midwinter. It was warm and pleasant in the bright sunshine that bathed the valley floor, though there was a light coating of snow, like sugar frosting, on the higher peaks of the Panamints.

Death Valley Fever

In Death Valley itself, the air seemed drugged with contentment. A feeling came over me of wanting to stay there forever—prospecting a little perhaps, retreating to the higher altitudes of the mountains when summer came, possibly even some day tackling the puzzle of the Lost Gunsight mine. I could use, I thought, a million dollars.

"Gettin' Death Valley fever?" grinned Barrett. "There's worse things, I reckon."

Without waiting for me to reply the old man went on, "I been thinkin' about the Lost Gunsight a heap lately. The way it is I've had the fun o' plannin' what I'd do with them millions time an' agin. Spent 'em in my mind a dozen diff'rent ways. No headaches, no worry. If I seen I made a mistake doin' one thing, all I had to do was rub out that idea, an' figure somethin' else.

"Ain't many millionaires kin change things that easy. Mebbe I'm just as well off if I never find that lost vein o' pure silver."

"You mean you're going to quit your search? After all these years."

Hoping and Planning

Barrett gave me a quick look, like a schoolteacher taking a sidelong glance at a not too bright pupil.

"Course not," he said scornfully. "A feller has to have some hope fer the future to keep him goin'." Then he added with a quiet smile, "But mebbe it's the hopin' and the plannin' that's the best part of it. Who knows?"

The lunch hour was over. "An' I ain't forgot I promised yuh that sample o' Lost Gunsight silver," Barrett called over his shoulder as he joined the little group at Salt Creek and went back to work.

I met the Government biologist in charge of the party. He said they were checking on the wild life in Death Valley. And he told me Barrett was right. Two species of cyprinodons, or "desert sardines" live in Death Valley in the saline waters of Salt Creek and Saratoga Springs.

But he didn't know much about desert rats—the two-legged kind—or the Lost Gunsight mine. I guess except for the dryness and the awful summer heat, it's pretty much the same in Death Valley as anywhere. It all depends on what you're interested in—cyprinodons, or something else.

●

COMING NEXT MONTH

WOODEN WEALTH

The Story of Our Forest Lands

By SYL MacDOWELL

THE WRONG HORSE

By CHARLES STODDARD

Shifty Wilson was a mite careless of others' lives!

IN THE cruel school of the owlhoot, Shifty Wilson had learned never to underestimate the capacity of his fellow man for treachery. He had learned to live solely and simply by his aptitude for shooting straighter and sooner than anyone with whom he was likely to come in conflict. So far this ability had served him well, and he took such pride in it that sometimes it occupied his mind to the exclusion of thoughts that otherwise might have been more profitable.

He was thinking about it as he half-consciously pricked the already tender ribs of the laboring horse beneath him. So absorbed was he in thoughts of his own prowess, that he didn't feel the lacerated flesh quiver at the painful touch of his spur.

The job he'd just finished had been so perfectly planned and carried out. Shifty had inveigled the sheriff out of town on a wild goose chase. Then he had planted himself behind the corner of the red brick Farmers' and Stockmen's Bank. When the eagle-faced old cowman, riding up from the stock pens wearing the Prince Albert and flat black hat, had singlefooted his bunch-muscled bay up to the hitch-rack, Shifty had slunk up the stone steps and entered.

There was no one else but the teller inside. When the cattleman came in, Shifty was at a table, pretending to write out a slip. He knew that the old man had just been paid for a trail herd. He watched him lift up a coat-tail, thrust in a gnarled hand and pull out a big roll of bills.

In two steps, Shifty was at his side with a gun in his hand. Before he could speak, however, the teller had reached under the counter, and Shifty had felt it advisable to shoot him neatly in the center of the forehead. By this time, the cowman had a six-gun halfway out of a shoulder holster, and Shifty stopped his heart with a bullet and no more emotion than he would have expended in stopping a clock.

Then he had put on the cowman's Prince Albert—they were about of a size—stuck the big roll of greenbacks back in the tail pocket, put on the flat back hat,

Shifty Wilson

and ridden quietly out of town in the cowman's clothes on the cowman's horse.

SHIFTY was no horseman, but he knew that this horse would get him across the Snake River ahead of the law and into a county where the law was in hock to the wild bunch. As the little town petered out into the heat-seared desert, he relaxed the reins. The horse, nervous under a new and unskilled rider, broke into a jarring trot. Irritated, the outlaw dug spur. The great hindquarters bunched, stretched, and with a leap that snapped the rider's neck like a bullwhip,

the magnificent animal laid himself down to a distance-eating lope.

They were five miles out. Every time the horse had slowed down, Shifty had put spurs to him. He didn't care what happened to the beast as long as he took him over the river and into those far blue hills.

Full of the natural sense of superiority that the professional in any line feels for the amateur, Shifty chuckled at the neatness with which he had beaten the cowman and the teller to the draw. It was a chuckle without humor, a top-layer chuckle, brittle and shallow as the ice on a duck pond—and as cold.

The bay slowed down to a walk. Shifty roweled him and the horse trotted a little way and then slowed to a walk again. Shifty gave him a vicious dig with the spurs, but this time the animal didn't respond. He stopped short, turned his head around and looked at the outlaw. Shifty let out a lurid string of curses, and raked him. The bay simply folded his legs under him, and lay down. He could have gone on; but he was an intelligent animal, and simply refused to work for a man who abused him.

Shorty pulled on the reins and kicked and cursed till he was exhausted. Finally he pulled out his gun and shot the horse precisely in a small white spot in the middle of his forehead.

Then Shifty took off the Prince Albert which was stifling him, put the roll of bills in his hip pocket, and sat down on the dead horse. He felt naked out in that open desert. There was nothing behind him, around him or ahead of him but flat red dobie covered with low greasewood and sage bushes, relieved by scattering clumps of brighter green feathery-leaved mesquite. The trail to the river was a long white alkali-dusted ribbon.

A posse might already be on its way out from Trailtown. There were another three miles to go, and Shifty made up his angry mind to start walking. With one more brutal kick at the corpse of the horse, he set out. Soon his feet began to hurt. The heat of the desert scorched clear through his soles, and the unfamiliar exercise rubbed his soft skin raw. Before he'd gone half a mile he was not only suffering, but in a killing rage.

Suddenly he saw a horse and rider around the shoulder of a butte about a mile away. He thought at first it must be a mirage; but it kept coming along at an easy lope. In a few minutes the rider drew rein in front of him. He was a big man, black headed with a black mustache, and he looked like a tough customer. The horse was a tall, rangy black, about seventeen hand, big boned, and had three long white stockings and a big white blaze on his forehead. It was a horse that would be conspicuous in a full corral.

"What happened to you?" the rider asked flatly.

"My horse gave out a little way back. If ever I get out of this cussed desert—"

"Well, hop up behind, friend. I'm in a hurry, but I wouldn't leave a pack rat afoot out here."

"I'm headin' for the river. How about backtrackin' a way—till I can pick up a horse?"

"Sorry. Can't do it. If yuh want to ride, yuh'll have to go my way."

Shifty pulled out the cowman's bankroll, peeled off a hundred-dollar-bill. "Take me back, and I'll give yuh this hundred," he said.

"Pardner," the man said decisively, "I got important business upalong. I'm sorry for yore fix—but I got to get movin'. If yuh want to come, hop up."

Shifty's voice changed from a conciliatory whine to a throaty snarl. "Get down from that horse," he ordered. "I'm takin' it."

"So that's how it is?" the other replied. "My friend, the only way yuh'll ever get me off this horse is shoot me off. And you can burn up out here, now, for all the help yuh'll get from me."

The man's black eyes had a hard obsidian glitter. But Shifty didn't meet them. His eyes were fixed on the knot of the man's neckerchief. A hole appeared in it as he drew and shot. The rider toppled off the horse, and his gun which had barely cleared leather, flew out of his hand onto the hot ground unfired.

THE black jerked back, startled. Then as he nosed the fallen rider and snorted, Shifty smoothly sneaked the reins. The man was still breathing. Shifty put a bullet in his head. Then he went to the fancy, hand-tooled saddle, all complete with built-in saddle pockets, took

down the neatly coiled saddle rope and fixed the loop under the man's arms. He mounted, dragged the body out of sight of the trail, and with a satisfied smirk on his face, hit a fast clip for the river.

The horse seemed as eager to get back into the hills as Shifty was to make his acquaintance with them. It wasn't long before they entered the timbered fringe, plunged down the bank of the rushing stream and waded across. The water was about knee deep, and moving fast over a rocky bed. The black picked his way carefully, nosing the water and drinking as he went.

As they breasted the far bank, Shifty relaxed in relief. He tied the horse to a pine tree, and went back to the edge of the stream to get a long drink. He let himself down flat on a rock, plunged his wrists into the cool water, rinsed out his cottony mouth, and began to drink. It felt good as his desiccated tissues soaked up the clean mountain water. He drank again and again. In between drinks, he'd lie still with his wrists dangling in the river and gloat over his gun-speed which twice that day had proved to be such an invaluable business asset.

Once he heard the black whinny, but the sound came faintly through the noise of the rock-rattling river, and he paid no attention to it. For a few minutes he lay there drinking and resting. Then thinking he'd better push on deeper into owlhoot country—just in case—he got up and turned toward the bank—and faced a semicircle of dusty horsemen, their grim eyes fixed on him steadily.

"Howdy, gents," Shifty said cockily, "was I barrin' yore way to the river?"

"Who're you?" a rawboned man on a big roan asked.

"Who're you to ask?" Shifty retorted.

"Yuh'd better answer, son. There's been murder done, and we're in no mood for triflin'."

This wasn't the kind of setup Shifty liked, he decided, as his eyes swept around the semicircle. There were five of them. He was afoot. What good would his gun-speed do him?

"I'm just a pilgrim, passin' through," he said. "I rode out from Trailtown this mornin'. Friend of mine's got a ranch in the hills. I'm headin' up there."

"Did yuh say yuh come out from Trailtown this mornin'?" the man asked slowly, his eyes holding Shifty's.

"That's what I said."

"We tracked that horse you got tied up, straight from old man Maxstead's body—comin' out of the hills, not into them. Not only that, but before Maxstead died, he was able to tell us what the killer was ridin'—a blaze-face black with three white stockin's."

"That ain't my horse."

"Where is yore horse?"

"Well, that's my horse now. But I traded with a man back across the river a piece."

"That might make sense. The feller would want to get shut of the horse he'd been ridin' when he did the killin'." He turned to one of the other riders. "Go look in that black's saddle pockets."

Shifty's heart was pounding in his chest as the man stepped over to the horse and unbuckled the pocket straps, turned back the flap and pulled out a rawhide poke. He brought it over and handed it to the rawboned leader, who examined it closely, and then untied the pokestrings and looked inside.

He looked up at Shifty. "This is Maxstead's poke," he said. "It's got the old man's initials on it—O.M., Oscar Maxstead. I suppose that when this feller traded horses with you he gave yuh a poke with two thousand dollars in it to boot. That must have been quite a lot of horse yuh traded with him."

An icy silence held the little gathering. All five of the ranchers stared steadily at Shifty, as if waiting for him to give an answer or draw a gun. The river rushed on unheeding behind him. It silenced the breeze that was playing in the pinetops. Shifty cast one longing glance up to the sheltering hills.

"Have yuh any answer to that one?" the rawboned leader asked sternly.

DESPERATELY Shifty yearned to reach for his gun. He couldn't think of any answer. Thoughts chased each other in a panic through his head, but none of them were any good. This was the position he'd always carefully avoided. Never before had he been in a spot that he couldn't either talk or shoot his way out of. His own job had been perfect—

(Concluded on page 103)

"Enslaver of the poor and helpless! Your dastardly work is done forever!"

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

WITHIN the space of ten days, two arrivals aroused the keen interest of the residents of the little pueblo of Reina de Los Angeles. The first was a young woman who announced that she was known to the public merely as Senorita Juanita. She arrived with a cart caravan, sitting in the end of the first ox-drawn cart and letting her feet hang out.

She had a haunting smile, and beneath long black lashes her smoky eyes surveyed the pueblo and its inhabitants in what might be called a speculative manner.

Don Diego Vega Wears His Black Cloak to

ZORRO SERENADES A SIREN

"That one," said the first man who noticed her, "is no mystery." Wherein, despite appearances, he was wrong.

The caravan was one of empty carts returning to a rancho down San Luis Rey way after delivering a cargo to Monterey.

Do Battle With Black-Hearted Oppressors!

The senorita had boarded the cart, the pueblo soon learned, at Santa Barbara, where an indignant alcalde and a frowning padre from the mission had made sure of her departure. It was whispered that the commanding officer of troops there had regretted her leaving, and that she had danced and sung for the officers the evening before.

She spoke to the driver of the cart when Reina de Los Angeles was reached, and he gestured toward a distant building. When its vicinity was neared, she sprang out of the cart, taking from it a huge bundle covered with a shawl, containing her personal belongings. She laughed at the driver of the cart and blew him a kiss, and went up the gentle slope carrying her bundle, her hips swinging gracefully.

The building was the barracks, where at the moment Sergeant Manuel Garcia was in command during the absence of his *capitán,* who had been summoned to Monterey to explain to an irate Governor why he had not caught Senor Zorro, the masked man who rode a big black horse at night and used blade, gun and whip against those who mistreated and oppressed the poor and downtrodden.

When she reached the entrance to the barracks, Senorita Juanita made eyes at the guard. The trooper eyed her in return, but with some hostility. He was a middle-aged man who had been caused considerable trouble by a woman in days gone by, and for the fair sex had no feeling except an abiding hatred.

"Be off!" he ordered.

At that instant, ponderous Sergeant Garcia happened to emerge from his office to see and listen. The girl noticed his badges of rank and appealed to him.

"It is an urgent matter, senor," she told Garcia. "I have important information for you. I have just arrived on the cart caravan—"

"Into my office, senorita!" Garcia ordered. "And you," he added to the trooper on guard at the door, "be more careful in your reception of persons who come to the barracks. One never knows."

WITHIN the half hour, Senorita Juanita appeared again with Sergeant Garcia beside her. She tilted her nose as she passed the guard, and the sergeant glared at him. The pair went down the slope toward the plaza. It was after the siesta hour, and those of the town were taking a leisurely promenade. The sergeant and his unknown charge were seen and word of her arrival spread.

They went directly to the tavern, where Garcia beckoned the fat innkeeper.

"Senor," he said, in low tones, "here is Senorita Juanita, a singing and dancing girl who has entertained at the best cantinas in Alta California. She is to work here for you."

"For me? Never have I employed a cantina girl!" the innkeeper protested.

"You are about to employ one now, senor," Garcia informed him. "She is to have the best treatment—a nice room off the patio, an abundance of good food and drink. She will arrange her own program. She is under my protection."

"But, my Sergeant! Business is poor. I am almost an impoverished man—"

"When the senorita dances and sings your business will pick up amazingly," the sergeant promised him.

"I can see at a glance that the senorita is one of those highly paid for her talents, and I cannot afford it. Ah, how ravishing it would be to have such a one perform in the main room for my customers! But, as I remarked, I cannot afford it! I am impoverished already—"

"Attend me, and silence your tongue as you listen! The senorita will do her best for your patrons, singing and dancing both, and the only cost to you will be her living quarters and her food and drink. She is to retain any small coins your customers may bestow upon her. If you desire, you may hint that you have engaged her at an enormous salary, and thus gain prestige."

"Ah, that is different! No doubt she will be worth room and food," the innkeeper replied. "But, who pays her, Sergeant? You, with your small wage—"

"Dolt and fool and ass!" Garcia barked at him. "Must you know everything—the secrets of government, perhaps? Do as you are told, and guard your words. Escort the senorita to a good room, give her what she wants of eat and drink, and see that she is treated courteously."

"As to the last—" the innkeeper began.

"Do not despair, Senor," the senorita told him, smiling slightly. "I shall see to it personally that I am treated courteous-

ly. I carry a poniard with me always—and where I can reach it easily."

The tavernkeeper shivered slightly, glanced again at Sergeant Garcia, then bowed.

"The affair is settled," he said. "Please to come with me, Senorita, and I'll see that you are properly domiciled in this my place of business and residence."

Because Garcia saw that it was spread, the news promptly went through the town that the tavernkeeper had engaged at enormous expense the cream of all cantina girls, fresh from triumphs in Monterey and San Francisco de Asis. That same evening, Senorita Juanita was pleased to strum a guitar and sing, and then dance while someone else played.

A native servant followed around after her as she danced and picked up the coins tossed her way to hand to her later. Then the senorita disappeared, and the tavernkeeper let men hope she would return as long as they spent money, finally being obliged to explain that she was greatly fatigued from her journey and would not appear until the following evening.

ON the third evening, Don Diego Vega, dressed in his usual resplendent raiment, appeared in the tavern to buy a jar of the crystallized honey the innkeeper sold. Yawning behind a lace-edged handkerchief which had been delicately scented, and seeming to be bored with life, he tossed a coin upon the counter and listened to the fulsome compliments of the tavern man.

"And, Don Diego, you are just in time to see and hear my new acquisition, Senorita Juanita," the innkeeper related. "Ah, what beauty and grace! What singing and dancing!"

"Do you criticize or praise?" Diego asked. "From your tone, one cannot tell."

"Wait until you see her, Don Diego! At great expense, I have had her sent me from Monterey."

He would have continued, but at that instant those in the tavern, the main room of which was crowded this evening, began clapping their hands and shouting, and Diego looked toward the patio door and saw the senorita.

She already had observed him through the doorway, and she knew the real thing when she saw it. Regardless of her other activities, she would not ignore the opportunity of attracting the attention of the scion of one of the richest and most powerful families in all Alta California.

Diego sat on a bench after the innkeeper had brushed the dust off it with his apron, and yawned behind his handkerchief again as the girl began playing and singing. She moved among the tables, talking with her eyes, her movements graceful. Twice she passed near Diego, who looked at the ceiling and seemed to be listening to her song.

Then she danced. He did not look at the ceiling now. He watched her closely as she moved faster and faster, her skirts swirling and at times exposing a neat ankle to fire the imagination. She brushed her skirts against him as she passed the bench, turned and looked over her shoulder to see how he had taken it. Diego yawned.

Anger flamed in the senorita's eyes. She increased the tempo of her dance and when it reached an end she sank to the floor with head bowed and arms outstretched. Those in the room tossed coins for the native servant to pick up for her, sprang to their feet and yelled, begged her to sit at table with them and drink the best wine in the house. But Diego only yawned again.

He arose from the bench and went to the counter for his jar of honey.

"What think you of her?" the innkeeper asked him.

"Did you say you had acquired her at great expense?" Diego asked. "A sad waste of good money, my friend. However, toss her this coin for me. One should pay such persons." He gave the innkeeper a gold piece and strolled from the tavern.

Senorita Juanita had been watching and listening, and now she appeared behind the counter.

"The coin is for me," she told the innkeeper, as he was starting to pocket it. "Tell me! What is the name of that half-dead caballero who yawns when I dance and sing?"

"He? That was Don Diego Vega, only son of Don Alejandro, the best catch in the country—except that no senorita has been able to catch him."

"No doubt they did not try. He is like a lifeless fish! Where is his fire, this young caballero? He will die of yawning."

"Careful how you speak!" the innkeeper warned. "The Vegas are most powerful."

"His father should take the son in hand, then, and remake him. Yawn when I sing and dance, will he? 'Tis a wonder this bold Senor Zorro, who rides the highways in these parts with his face behind a mask, does not prick this bloodless Vega with his blade to see if he could draw a drop of blood. If he did, no doubt it would be as thin as water and as cold."

She went away angrily to rest in her room until it was time for her to dance again, innocent of the knowledge that the spineless Diego was also the Senor Zorro she had mentioned.

SOME days later, there was another arrival in Reina de Los Angeles, this time a senor who seemed to be a man of some importance. He came riding an excellent horse, and with a peon servant following with a pack mule.

The stranger announced that he was Alfredo Romo, and his talk intimated that he was a wealthy trader traveling from Monterey to San Diego de Alcalá and spending some time in each district, seeking for likely places in which to build a branch of his business.

His arrival gladdened the heart of the tavernkeeper, for Senor Romo was a free spender, buying wine for all, ordering the most expensive dishes, making friends with everybody and paying for the privilege.

It was observed that Senor Alfredo Romo paid a visit to the barracks and exhibited his traveling papers to Sergeant Garcia. The latter showed most profound respect, which was nothing new for Garcia if he scented free wine.

Senor Romo asked a multitude of questions about the district, the native and peon help, the numbers of men working on nearby ranchos, and all that. But that was a natural thing in a man who spoke of opening a branch of his business. He was merely estimating the trade territory, men supposed.

On a certain afternoon, Diego strolled along the side of the plaza and toward the little chapel, for aged Fray Felipe, his confessor, had sent for him. Their ceremonial greetings over, the padre escorted Diego to his private room, where they could converse without danger of being overheard.

Fray Felipe was one of three persons who knew the identity of Senor Zorro. The others were Diego's father and Bernardo, his mute peon servant.

"We have had two new arrivals in the pueblo recently," the padre mentioned.

"I have seen them both," Diego replied. "The senorita closely and the fine new senor from a distance."

"As to the senorita—" Fray Felipe began.

"I can imagine your thoughts concerning her," Diego interrupted. "But such always have been and perhaps always will be."

"I had no intention, my son, of speaking of her possible morals or lack of them," the padre continued. "I doubt whether what you have in mind is her real reason for traveling about the country. In fact, I am sure it is something else, something far worse."

"How is this?"

"I have reports of her—and of another," Fray Felipe said. "Confidential reports that have come to me from missions to the north. She began in Monterey, after remaining there for a time after her arrival by ship from Mexico."

"Began what, padre?" Diego urged.

"Allow me, my son. From Monterey, she traveled south, always pretending to be nothing more than a cantina girl. She stopped at each pueblo and mission. And always she asked a multitude of questions, like an innocent child desiring to learn."

"Perhaps she did desire knowledge."

"Of the rancho district, of natives and peon workmen, of men living without remunerative labor? Would such a one be concerned in those things—naturally?"

"What then, padre?"

"Always, after a few days of time, she has been followed by this man who calls himself Alfredo Romo and pretends to be a wealthy trader."

"Perhaps an infatuation lures him on and on," Diego suggested. "I have heard of such things."

"Bah! Wherever she stops, the senorita goes to the authorities and speaks with them—"

"A traveler is supposed to show his or her papers, padre."

"That is true, my son; but wait until I

have finished. I happen to know that in every case some man in authority has put himself to the trouble of getting her an engagement to sing and dance, as if he had orders to do so. Here in Reina de Los Angeles, Sergeant Garcia actually compelled the tavern keeper to engage her. When I rebuked him for having a cantina girl, he defended himself to me by explaining. Garcia told him he had only to give her lodging and food. Her fees are being paid from some other source."

"I grow interested, padre."

"I had thought you would. Behind her, as I have said, always comes this Alfredo Romo with his multitude of questions. And in every case, immediately thereafter, many men are seized and sent north to Monterey."

"What is this?" Diego cried.

"Alfredo Romo is a government recruiter. It is peonage. The poor creatures are rounded up unexpectedly like so many cattle, torn from their families in some cases, packed into carts, tied together, threatened and beaten, and taken to Monterey in secret. And from there they are shipped in foul vessels to Mexico, on the Gulf side, are then driven overland and scattered among the plantations and sent to work in the mines. Especially the latter—where they do not live long."

"Is that a fact?" Diego cried, getting to his feet and starting to pace the floor.

"A pretty thing, is it not? A thing we of the Franciscan order have not been able to touch. We can do nothing but warn, and that avails us little. This, my son, is a task for—Zorro."

Diego breathed deeply, and his eyes met those of the padre.

"You are right," he replied. "It is a task for Zorro. No doubt Zorro will learn of this and act accordingly."

THE following evening Senorita Juanita danced before a crowd that jammed the big main room of the tavern. The innkeeper was jubilant. He had put more native servants to work. He had two peons carrying wineskins from the cellar. Coins poured into his purse. If this sort of thing continued long enough, he would be rich.

Senorita Juanita, he observed, kept herself aloof from all with the exception of Senor Alfredo Romo. She revealed some consideration toward him, and the innkeeper believed him to be the favored one. He watched carefully, but they appeared to have no meeting outside the common room.

If he happened to be puzzled at times regarding the real status of the senorita, happened to wonder why she worked there for no more than food and lodging and what coins were tossed to her, he cast such thoughts aside. He had more sense than to look a gift horse in the teeth to estimate his age.

Having finished her dance on this evening, the senorita retired to her private room to rest for her next appearance. It was a well-furnished room, and she was comfortable in it. She latched the door and stretched upon her cot, putting a scarf over her eyes to keep from them the light of the one taper burning.

A moment later, something came through the open barred window and thumped upon the floor. The senorita gave a squeal of alarm and sprang off the cot, reaching for her dagger. On the floor she spied a folded sheet of parchment, attached to which was a rock held by a thong. Working quickly, she unfolded the parchment and read:

Sweetest senorita! One who cannot make himself known at this moment would have private speech with you. Circumstances are such that he dare not speak to you in the common room of the inn. His standing in the community will not admit of it. When you are through singing and dancing tonight and all have retired except the few wine guzzlers in the common room, no doubt you will feel the necessity for a breath of such sweet fresh air as can be found only at the end of the patio on the left hand side.

There was no signature. The senorita folded the parchment and thrust it into her bodice. She was smiling slightly. One of such standing in the community that he could not speak to her in the common room, eh? That meant a hidalgo, or the son of one. Perhaps, she thought, that spineless fop of a Don Diego Vega was not so dead to emotion as she had judged. Either him, or another.

It was not the first episode of the sort in Senorita Juanita's career. Often she had received such epistles, in Mexico and also here in Alta California. There promised to be a rare profit in this. So long as it did not interfere with her official duties, she could learn whether the profit existed in fact.

She danced and sang better than before, and finally retired to her room as though to go to bed. After an interval during which it grew quieter in the common room, she extinguished the taper. She waited still a few moments, then wrapped a shawl around her shoulders and draped a mantilla over her head and the high comb adorning her thick raven hair.

Opening the door, she found the patio deserted. She went from the room like a shadow, closing the door behind her, and strolled toward the end, keeping to the shadows beneath the arches as much as possible.

In the spot the note had indicated, she waited. No one was in sight. She did not fear the appearance of Romo, for they thought it better to avoid each other in secret as much as possible. And there was a soft mist falling, so none of the few roisterers remaining in the common room would venture into the patio.

The mist was commencing to make itself uncomfortable to the senorita herself when, from close by, she heard a whisper: "Senorita Juanita!"

"*Si?*" she asked. She was holding the dagger in her hand as she spoke. Life had taught her to trust nobody.

"'Tis I who sent you the communication."

"And what is your identity?" she questioned. "I cannot even see you."

"Since I find it safe, I'll approach. Kindly do not scream at sight of me and call attention to my presence. You are in no danger from me, senorita."

She heard a movement at her left, and then, in the faint streak of light that came from the nearest flaring torch in the patio, she saw him—a man dressed in black, with a black hood over his head and a gleaming sword at his side.

SENORITA JUANITA laughed a little. It was not the first time a man of high birth had approched her masked. But usually they cast aside the mask after the first meeting.

"How are you named, senor?" she asked him. "And why have you sought this interview in such a remarkable manner?"

"Is it necessary for you to ask that last, Senorita? What man would not seek a meeting with such a rare beauty, such a sweet singer and graceful dancer? My heart pounded at my ribs as I watched you, as I listened to your song."

"Ah, senor! Your speech is most romantic."

"You would make the dullest of men turn romantic, senorita, believe me!"

"Pardon me, senor, but this meeting is to what end?"

"To many more meetings, let me hope."

"But you have not yet revealed your identity to me."

"Promise you will not be frightened when I do so."

She laughed softly again. "High names do not frighten me, senor. Many men of high birth have sought to gain my acquaintance."

"You have perhaps heard of Senor Zorro?"

"I have. The bold man who rides the highways and laughs at the foolish troopers who try to catch him? What a man he is!"

"I am he, Senorita."

"You? You are—Zorro?"

"Please keep your voice down, Senorita. Do not forget that a large and flattering reward has been offered by the Governor for my capture."

"As if I would betray you! Where did you hear and see me sing and dance, Senor? How could you have done so?"

"Men do not know me when my mask is off, Senorita. I move among others freely at times. Let us say that I happened to be here present in the pueblo, and was one of the crowd that heard and saw you."

"And you were attracted, Senor?"

"Would I be here else, Senorita?"

"But what comes of the meeting?" she asked.

"Another—and another! Unless—"

"Unless what, senor?"

"I have heard a whisper that you are interested in one man only and will never grow interested in anyone else. If that be true, my time is being wasted, and you have kept this rendezvous only through curiosity."

"Name the man."

"Alfredo Romo, the rich trader."

"Did it not attract attention, Senor, I should laugh at that statement."

"You do not know him well, then?"

"I never saw him until he came here to Reina de Los Angeles. It is true he tossed a gold coin to me, and asked me to meet

him after I had done my evening's entertainment. But I am here talking to you, am I not?"

"That is true."

"Unmask, Senor Zorro, and let me see your features."

"My ugliness might cause you repugnance."

"Ah, no! A man who does and dares as you do could not be ugly."

"If we could become attracted to each other, Senorita, what a life of thrills we could lead!"

"Listen, Senor! If such came to pass, what profit we could have together! Thrills, love, riches!"

"Riches, Senorita?"

"*Si!* I have traveled down the coast from Monterey and have acquired knowledge. I know where rich people keep their gold and jewels. I could lead foolish young rich caballeros into an ambush for you. We could reap a harvest! And then—to Mexico, to live like king and queen!"

"You paint a beautiful picture, senorita."

"And you—you risk liberty and perhaps life to speak to me here tonight—"

"It is nothing! To do so I would risk much more. But I cannot tarry now. Shall we meet again?"

"Tomorrow evening, Senor, at this hour."

"I shall have to make it the hour safest and most opportune for me, Senorita. To announce my presence, I will serenade you tomorrow evening beneath your window. Meet me a short time after my song."

He extended his gloved hand across the palings and took her own, bent and kissed the palm of it, and then was gone into the deeper shadows with not the slightest noise.

SHE strolled back to the door of her patio room—and there encountered Alfredo Romo. "I came for a short conference, and found you gone," he whispered. "You were talking to some man at the end of the patio."

"Is it not my duty to get information?" she asked.

"Not in such a manner. There may be spies about. If my object is learned, my usefulness will be ended and the Governor will dismiss me. You never have been careless before. Can it be possible you are indulging in a romance?"

"If so?" she questioned.

He grasped her arms. "Do not play with me, Juanita! If you encourage another man, he dies! In both business and love, you are mine! This should be the district of my greatest success. I'll strip the ranchos of natives and peons. What a cargo we'll have to send to Mexico! And the reward will be huge. Can you match that in any other man?"

"Perhaps," she taunted. "I may find a man who can give me a thrill an hour, some one who rides with a price on his head, who takes gold where he finds it, and quickly without secret planning and the asking of thousands of questions."

"Do not talk like a fool! With whom were you speaking at the end of the patio?"

"Some fool, perhaps, who waited to catch me there and plead his love and ask for a rendezvous. Has such not happened scores of times before? Is it not a part of the game I must play? I am tired now, and must get to bed. *Buenas noches, senor!*"

Romo returned to his own room to find a communication had been tossed through his window. He picked it up and read it swiftly.

Your affairs are in danger of being betrayed. A recruiter for peonage should be wary of his co-workers. Your fair assistant may meet her admirer again tomorrow night. Would it not be best, and quietest, to deal with him personally? Quietly—say with a blade. A pistol might attract attention and let it become known to Sergeant Garcia that he should report to his superiors that you are not discreet.

After he had read that unsigned missive, Romo paced around his room like a man enraged. So, somebody knew! But evidently a friend, since he sent this warning.

Juanita, he supposed, had met some man and had conceived a swift infatuation. Both jealousy and rage at his affairs being threatened with disaster impelled Romo to handle this matter personally, as Zorro had thought they would.

He did not wish to lower himself by going to Garcia for help and exposing his weakness. Garcia impressed him as a man who would send in an adverse report on him. And this had been a profitable business.

He watched Juanita the following day. She could not keep from betraying a sudden interest and agitation foreign to her. But Romo held back bitter speech and spoke to her only in the presence of others early in the evening when they met in the common room of the tavern.

After she had danced the second time and had retired, Romo bought wine for all present, pleaded fatigue and a headache, and went to his own room. He buckled on his blade. Whoever had warned him had been wise; a pistol shot might ruin everything. He wondered as to the informer. Would somebody appear afterward and try blackmail? In such case, Romo would know how to handle him.

This night, there was no mist. A bright moon sailed the sky, obscured at intervals by scudding clouds that came in from the distant sea. Zorro rode his black horse to within a short distance of the sprawling tavern, and left him in a spot of darkness behind a storage shed.

CARRYING an old guitar the loss of which would cause him no regret, he went through the deep shadows and got outside the window of the senorita's room. He strummed the instrument and began singing a love song in a low voice. She spoke from the window: "That is enough for the signal, Senor. Someone may hear you, and we do not wish to be observed. I'll go at once to the end of the patio."

"A moment, Senorita," he whispered. "This meeting may lead to a decision between us. Have you considered well? In case you see my face and like it, and are pleased with me tonight, would you give up everything to ride with me?"

"Without a regret, senor."

"But your present employment is profitable, I understand. To work as you do with the peonage agent—"

"Senor! You know?"

"It is necessary for Zorro to know many things if he would preserve his own life and take a profit."

"What you have said is true, senor. I have worked with him at his order. I have infatuated men to get them to talk, so I could learn where peons and natives could be seized with ease."

"And sold into slavery?"

"At so much a head, Senor. But what do we care about such cattle? All that will be over. I'll ride with you. We'll have a thousand thrills a day. We'll grow wealthy—"

"Get to the rendezvous and await me there," Zorro broke in.

He went silently through the shadows again, leaving the old guitar behind on the ground. He was cautious now, knowing that Romo would be lurking somewhere near, realizing that the fellow might take him with a foul and unexpected thrust.

A streak of moonlight revealed the senorita to him as she took up position inside the paled fence. Zorro's eyes searched the shadows. He had to risk a shot, but thought Romo would not fire and attract attention. He would try ambush instead.

The moonlight was bright for some distance around where the senorita was waiting. Romo could not get within sword's length without being seen. Zorro loosened his own blade in its scabbard and put hand to hilt, then stepped into the moonlight and advanced rapidly toward the waiting girl.

"Ah, here you are!" she whispered. "How I long to see your face!"

"We may be interrupted, Senorita."

"Who is to bother us? None suspects I am here. Come closer to the fence and let me clasp your hand. Let me remove the mask—"

"Tell me again, Senorita—you will cease serving the peonage agent and ride with me?"

"To the end of the world, Senor, if we are pleasing to each other."

A bellow of rage came from a nearby dark spot, and Romo charged forward, blade in hand. Zorro side-stepped quickly and whipped out his own weapon as the girl gave a cry of fright.

"She traitor!" Romo yelled at her. "I'll attend to you after I have finished with this lout—"

"Lout? You fight with the famed Zorro, you fool!" she replied to him. "He'll laugh as you die! He is a man—"

The blades were clashing already, and for Romo there was no retreat. The tone of the girl's voice told him she spoke the truth. A great fear came upon him.

Zorro was speaking as they fought, as he tried out Romo's wrist and got the feel of his blade and learned he had nothing to fear from this antagonist: "Enslaver of the

poor and helpless! Your dastardly work is done forever!"

Romo gave ground before what he thought was a furious attack. The perspiration came out upon his brow in great globules, perspiration induced by a great fear. "Help!" he screeched at the top of his voice. "Zorro is here!"

"Too late to call now," Zorro told him. "I but play with you, Senor. Were you not such a fiend, I'd disarm you and go my way. But to send men to slavery and death as you have done—that deserves the worst punishment."

He laughed as Romo tried a rally, and beat the man back to the fence of palings. Senorita Juanita, her hands clutched at her breast, had retired a few feet into the shadows to watch from there.

"Do not slay me," Romo whined.

"Craven! I could thrust you through the heart at any moment. But I'll spare your life. Through the lung—"

Romo gave a cry as the blade entered his body, dropped his own weapon, sprawled. Zorro stepped back, sheathing his sword, knowing that Fray Felipe would be pleased that he had removed the menace to men's liberty without actually taking a human life.

The senorita rushed from the shadows to the fence. "Now," she whispered. "Show me your face. Then I must get to my room. Tomorrow night, here—"

"No tomorrow night," Zorro told her. "Think you I would have romance with a thing like you? Get you gone from the pueblo, from Alta California, else hide from the sight of all men. You are no less

[*Turn page*]

FIGHT TUBERCULOSIS!

BUY CHRISTMAS SEALS!

REDUCE FAT!

UP TO 5lbs. A WEEK

YET EAT PLENTY!

The New, Scientific Way to

LOSE WEIGHT

Feel full of pep and energy. Overcome that tired feeling this Doctor Approved Way!

REDUCE 10-20-30 LBS.

AND IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH!

WE GUARANTEE THESE STATEMENTS OR YOU

DON'T PAY A PENNY!

Don't be denied a beautiful, attractive figure. Lose ugly excess fat easily, quickly, pleasantly, safely—we guarantee it! KELPIDINE does the work with little effort on your part, is ABSOLUTELY HARMLESS and supplies a food mineral which is VITAL for balanced nutrition. KELPIDINE IS GOOD FOR YOU! It decreases your appetite, gives you more energy, vitality and vigor. YOU'LL ENJOY REDUCING THIS WAY!

Proven results are shown quickly. Many report losing 16, 20, 30 lbs. and even more in a few short weeks. With KELPIDINE, ugly fat and extra inches seem to disappear like magic.

Kelpidine (fucus) is the only known food product listed in medical dictionaries as an ANTI-FAT, FOR RELIEF OF OBESITY AND AS AN AID IN REDUCING. An United States Government Agency classifies KELPIDINE as a food. It is safe and brings remarkable results quickly and easily.

"My grateful Thanks to Kelpidine. In just a few weeks I lost 3 inches thru the waistline and hips. It's amazing." Joan Fleming, New York City.

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE WITH A 10-DAY FREE TRIAL!

$2 If Kelpidine doesn't do the wonders for you as it has for others, if you don't lose as much weight as you want to lose, if you're not 100% delighted with results, YOUR MONEY WILL BE RETURNED AT ONCE!

FREE! The famous Dr. Phillips Reducing Plan which has helped many lose 20, 30 and up to 40 pounds, quickly and safely will be sent absolutely FREE with your order

MAIL COUPON NOW!

American Healthaids Co., Dept. T T
871 Broad Street, Newark, New Jersey

Send me at once for $2 cash, check or money order, one month's supply of Kelpidine Tablets, postpaid. If I am not 100% satisfied my money will be refunded.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

☐ I enclose $5. send three months' supply.

SENT ON APPROVAL!

AUDELS Carpenters and Builders Guides 4 vols. $6

Inside Trade Information for Carpenters, Builders, Joiners, Building Mechanics and all Woodworkers. These Guides give you the short-cut instructions that you want—including new methods, ideas, solutions, plans, systems and money saving suggestions. An easy progressive course for the apprentice and student. A practical daily helper and Quick Reference for the master worker. Carpenters everywhere are using these Guides as a Helping Hand to Easier Work, Better Work and Better Pay. To get this assistance for yourself, simply fill in and mail the FREE COUPON below.

Inside Trade Information On:

How to use the steel square—How to file and set saws—How to build furniture—How to use a mitre box—How to use the chalk line—How to use rules and scales—How to make joints—Carpenters arithmetic—Solving mensuration problems—Estimating strength of timbers—How to set girders and sills—How to frame houses and roofs—How to estimate costs—How to build houses, barns, garages, bungalows, etc.—How to read and draw plans—Drawing up specifications—How to excavate—How to use settings 12, 13 and 17 on the steel square—How to build hoists and scaffolds—skylights—How to build stairs—How to put on interior trim—How to hang doors—How to lath—lay floors—How to paint

AUDEL, Publishers, 49 W. 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.

Mail Audels Carpenters and Builders Guides, 4 vols., on 7 days free trial. If OK I will remit $1 in 7 days and $1 monthly until $6 is paid. Otherwise I will return them. No obligation unless I am satisfied.

Name_____

Address_____

Occupation_____

Employed by_____ PAL

Fit-Rite makes False Teeth TIGHT

Makes loose dental plates fit snugly and comfortably.
LASTS for MONTHS!

Simply squeeze on dental plate and put it in your mouth. Hardens and becomes part of plate. Money-back guarantee.

FREE Generous package of Dental Plate Cleanser with each order. Send $1.00 or mailed parcel post collect.

Fit-Rite Co., 1573 Milwaukee Ave.
Dept. 2-82, Chicago, Ill.

"How to Make Money With Simple Cartoons"

A book everyone who likes to draw should have. It is free; no obligations. Simply address:

CARTOONISTS' EXCHANGE
Dept. 72 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

SEND FOR THIS FREE!

Make money with horses. Every farmer, every lover of horseflesh should have a copy of this booklet. If you want to know how to break, train and make money with horses, *write today for full information FREE*, together with my special offer of a course in Animal Breeding. If you are interested in Gaiting and Riding the saddle horse check here. ☐ *Do it today—now. You'll never regret it.*

BEERY SCHOOL OF HORSEMANSHIP
Dept. 822 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

bad than this man on the ground. You knew the foul work you were doing. I only used you as a lure to bring this man within the reach of my blade."

He saw her dagger flash in the moonlight, and laughed as he dodged the blow. Romo's yells had been heard, and the landlord of the inn came charging out with other men at his heels. Zorro laughed wildly again, and turned to flee through the streaks of moonlight to the dark place behind the storage shed, where he had left his horse.

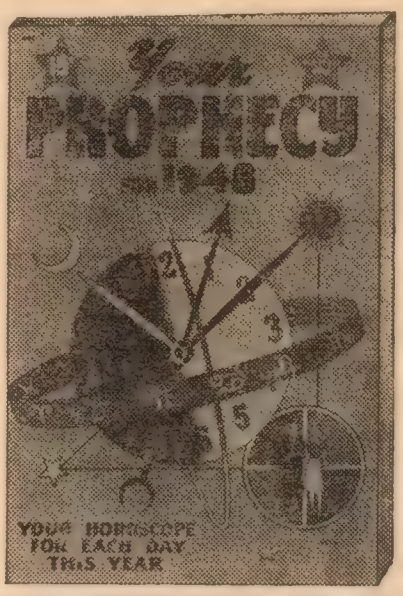
"Buenas noches, Senores!" he taunted.

Hoofbeats sounded as he rode off through the night, to circle the town and approach it again cautiously, dispose of his horse and costume and weapons, and enter his father's house, to report to proud old Don Alejandro what he had done.

NEXT ISSUE

ZORRO MEETS A WIZARD

JUST OUT!



YOUR STAR GUIDE FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR!

ONLY 15c AT ALL STANDS

THE WRONG HORSE

(Concluded from page 91)

and he was caught for another man's crime. It wasn't his fault. Or was it?

Shifty realized now he should have paid more attention to the condition of his first horse, instead of gloating over his gun-skill. If only he'd thought to look in those saddle pockets. If only he'd kept his wits about him when he was drinking, instead of relaxing. His previous successes had given him the feeling that he'd never run into anything too big for him, so he'd been careless.

Shifty couldn't answer. He could only gulp and move his hands out in a fluttering, futile gesture.

"Get his gun," the leader ordered.

That was Shifty's last chance. One of the men got down and came toward him. As he came close, Shifty could have killed him; for the others wouldn't have dared to shoot. And then he might have got one or two more. But Shifty still valued his miserable life. He knew he was licked, and he was as paralyzed as a frightened rabbit.

The man calmly pulled his gun out of the holster, and then, without it, Shifty collapsed. His legs started to tremble, and he fell groveling on the ground, pale as a sheet, sweating with fear and begging for mercy.

They picked him up and put him in the saddle of the black horse. They tied the end of the saddle rope to a limb and slipped the loop tight around his neck. Then one of the ranchers stung the black horse hard and sudden with the rope end, and he gave a leap that left Shifty swinging back and forth like the pendulum of a steeple clock.

"That feller shore must have had a bad conscience," one of the posse remarked. "If Gehenna is any worse'n what he suffered in the last five minutes—this hairpin is stickin' on the side of what's right and proper."

Entertaining Puzzles of Every Variety in

POPULAR CROSSWORD PUZZLES

NOW ON SALE—15c AT ALL STANDS!

Learn ELECTRICITY OR RADIO IN THE GREAT SHOPS OF COYNE

Your Choice of TWO GREAT FIELDS

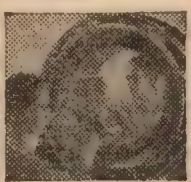
Only a few Short Weeks for Either Course!

Prepare for the future with ALL-AROUND TRAINING. Come to the SHOPS OF COYNE in Chicago, the school with 48 years of training experience, and be ready in a few weeks. For Veterans and Non-veterans!

ELECTRICITY

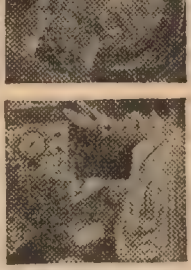
INCLUDING INDUSTRIAL ELECTRONICS

Big future in Power Plant Work, Motors, Armature Winding, Home and Factory Wiring, Appliances, Refrigeration, Maintenance, Illumination, etc. Electricians are in demand everywhere — lifetime job service. Many earn while learning. Send for BIG FREE BOOK on COYNE Training.



RADIO **ELECTRONICS TELEVISION**

A great field now, even greater growth ahead. Here at COYNE you're trained for Construction, Testing, Trouble-Shooting on Radio, Public Address, Sound Picture Units. Training includes FM, Photo-cells, Television, etc. Many Coyne Trained men own well-paying radio businesses of their own.



Not a "Home-Study" Course!

You get actual shop work on full-size equipment plus necessary theory. Whether you had previous experience or not makes no difference at Coyne.

NON-VETERANS WHO ARE SHORT OF MONEY can finance most of their tuition and pay it in easy monthly payments after graduation.

Electric Refrigeration

This training means additional opportunities. Training in this field now added to our Electrical or Radio course.

MAIL COUPON FOR FACTS!

See how we make it EASY for you to get ready NOW. Check course you prefer and rush to us for full details, FREE. No obligation—no salesman will call. Do it TODAY.

Approved for G. I. Training

B. W. COOKE, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
Dept. 28-84K
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago 12, Ill.

Send me your BIG FREE BOOK — for the course checked below. Also full details of your Student Finance Plan.

☐ ELECTRICITY ☐ RADIO

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....

IMITATION
MEN'S DIAMOND
1½ KARAT
$1000.00 FLASH

$2.95 PLUS TAX

Cut, polished and hand set as if it were a genuine diamond! The stone in this ring is the nearest approach to a diamond known to science. So real you or your friends can hardly tell the difference even on close inspection. One of America's Greatest Ring Values. Gold Filled or Sterling Silver. Write for yours NOW.

SEND NO MONEY

Just send name and address. State choice of Gold Filled or Sterling Silver. For ring size send string you have tied snugly around ring finger at middle joint. On arrival deposit only $2.95 plus 20% federal tax and C. O. D. postage. Wear it 10 days. If not delighted return for your money back. Save MONEY! Send cash and we pay postage. Write TODAY.

U. S. DIAMOND CO., Dept. 15-B
225 N. Michigan • Chicago 1, Ill.

LAW
STUDY AT HOME for PERSONAL SUCCESS and LARGER EARNINGS. 39 years expert instruction—over 108,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All texts furnished. Easy payments. G.I. Approved. Send for FREE BOOK. AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW Dept. 85-T, 646 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill.

LEARN MEAT CUTTING
At Home—In Spare Time

Get into the vital meat industry. Concise, practical Home Training based on 25 years proven instruction method used at National's famous resident school. Prepares you for bigger pay as Meat Cutter, supervisor, market manager or more money in your own store. Go as rapidly as your spare time permits. Diploma. Start NOW to turn your spare hours into money. Send for FREE bulletin today. No obligation. National School of Meat Cutting, Inc., Div. TG-28, Toledo 4, Ohio

Stop Getting Up Nights
TRY THIS FREE

If you get up many times at night due to Irritation of Bladder or Urinary Tract, and have never used PALMO TABLETS we want you to try them at our risk. We will send you a full-size package from which you are to use 20 tablets FREE. If not delighted at the palliative relief received, return the package and you owe us nothing. We mean it. Send No Money. No C.O.D. to pay. Write today and we will send your PALMO TABLETS by return mail postpaid. Address — H. D. POWERS CO., Dept. 229-M, Box 135, Battle Creek, Mich.

THE CHUCK WAGON

(Continued from page 10)

Lewis was second, Tommy Steiner was third and W. N. Rice fourth. James Kenney copped the calf roping, George Epperson was second, Bill Kellar was third and Ed Sims fourth.

Earl Teague was best man in the steer wrestling, Wayne Stout, was second, Speck Tipton was third and Bill Best fourth.

An Event at Flagstaff

Out at Flagstaff, Arizona, where about four decades ago cowboys usually drew a salary of around forty dollars per month, there was a three day rodeo. The top winner was John Odle, who drew down $783.00 in prize money. Second highest winner was Dick Stephens, who won $513.00. Fritz Taylor and Bob Hardt tied in winning, each garnering $405.00.

The final results in saddle bronc riding were—First, Joe Tyree; Second, Sid DeSpain; Third, Poog Branton.

Joe Joy copped the bull riding, Russ Durquette was second, and Dell Brooks was third. Fred Cook was best man in the steer wrestling, Bob Downs was second, and Sid DeSpain was third. John Odle outroped the field to win first place in the calf roping, Andrew Carter was second, and A. D. Browning, Jr., third. In the team tying Fritz Taylor and Bob Hardt were the winners, Dick Stephens and John Odle were second, Lonnie McFadden and Bud Pendergast were third.

Livestock Show

The Southwestern Livestock Show and Rodeo at El Paso, Texas, has set its dates for the 1948 show for February 24th to 29th. It is hoped that by that time the foot and mouth disease will be completely stamped out in Mexico, as the El Paso show suffered from the effects of the quarantine on cattle and other livestock this spring, the cattle used in the rodeo there having been quarantined and some of it slaughtered.

The dreaded foot and mouth disease has been prevalent in Mexico since early last winter, and there are now about three hundred cowboys engaged by the U. S. Federal Government patrolling the Mexican border to see that no stock of any kind crosses the

border. This government is working with the Mexican Government in an effort to stamp out the disease, and has sent numerous veterinarians down to Mexico to work with the Mexican vets in curbing the spread of the malady.

It is estimated that before the disease is finally stopped, approximately six million head of stock will be slaughtered in Mexico. So far the disease has been prevented from spreading across the Border into this country and it is sincerely hoped that it will be prevented from getting a hold in this country as it would work a hardship not only on cattlemen and rodeo folk, but also on the general public as it would further cut down the supply of beef.

Rapid City Rodeo

The Rapid City, South Dakota, Rodeo was a very successful show. The judges were Hugh Ridley and Harold Ridley. Timers were Mrs. Jim Laycock and Mrs. Earl Blevins. The announcer was Ed Denslow, the clown Scotty Bagnell, and the arena directors were Clint Smith and Hal Reid. Stock was furnished by Gene Madison.

The final results in bronc riding were—First, Ed Fulk; Second, Len Jacobs; Third and fourth prizes, split between Jiggs Thompson and Joe Madden.

In bull riding there were so many entries that there was only one go-round and no finals. The winner was Kieth Chartier. Lloyd Allen took second place, Paul Bond was third, Bob Chartier was fourth, and fifth and sixth prizes were split between Hoss Allen and Jack Freed.

Hoss Allen won the finals in the bareback bronc riding, Dale Greenwood was second, Ted Warhol was third and Jiggs Thompson was fourth. Lawrence Davis was best man in the calf roping, A. J. Pettigrew was second, Glenn Gentry was third and Herschel Romine was fourth. [*Turn page*]

FIGHT INFANTILE PARALYSIS

Join the MARCH OF DIMES

JANUARY 15-30

Low-Cost HOSPITAL and SURGICAL Policy

Insures Whole Family

Costs Only 3c a Day for Adults

Only 1½c a Day for Children

NOW! Hospital insurance that also provides payment toward DOCTOR'S FEE FOR OPERATIONS! Insure one person or whole family—mother, father, children. Issued to anyone in good health, 3 months to 65 years. Provides CASH to help pay for hospital room and board up to 90 days for each insured person in any one year; for other hospital expenses, too—medicines, X-Ray, laboratory fees, etc.; for doctor's fee for operations. MONEY PAID DIRECT TO YOU for your own doctor, any hospital. Special family group rates. Issued by nationally-known Sterling Insurance Company—over $3,500,000.00 Surplus for policyholders' protection. SEND NO MONEY. Mail coupon at once for SPECIAL 10-DAY TRIAL OFFER. NO OBLIGATION. ACT TODAY!

STERLING INSURANCE CO.
N-4652 STERLING BLDG., CHICAGO 11, ILL.

Send me 10-Day Trial Offer of LOW-COST Hospital and Surgical Family Plan.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

SHORTHAND in 6 Weeks at Home

Famous Speedwriting system. No signs or symbols; uses ABC's. Easy to learn; easy to write and transcribe. Fast preparation for a job. Surprisingly low cost. 100,000 taught by mail. Used in leading offices and Civil Service. Write for free booklet to: Speedwriting, Dept. 9001-6, 55 W. 42 St., N. Y. 18, N. Y.

Used ARMY SERVICE

SHOES $1.69 PR.
Good condition—Sizes 7 to 12
Plus 25c Parcel Post
10 Day money back Guarantee. Mail Check or M.O. No Cash.

SALE! ARMY BLANKETS reissued 100% all wool. Perfect for home, car, camps, etc. Only $2.95 Plus 25c P.P.

MAIL ORDER LEWIS, Dept. T.G., Box 213
699 Main Ave., Passaic, N. J.

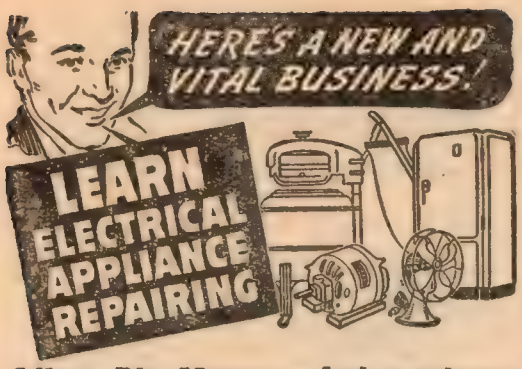
BE A *Nurse*

MAKE $30-$40 A WEEK

You can learn practical nursing at home in spare time. Course endorsed by physicians. Thousands of graduates. 49th yr. One graduate has charge of 10-bed hospital. Another saved $400 while learning. Equipment included. Men, women 18 to 60. High school not required. Easy tuition payments. Trial plan. Write today.

CHICAGO SCHOOL OF NURSING
Dept. 421, 100 East Ohio Street, Chicago 11, Ill.
Please send free booklet and 16 sample lesson pages.

Name.....
City.....*State*.....*Age*.....



Offers Big Money — Independence

If you are mechanically inclined—can hold and use tools it will pay you to learn electrical appliance repairing. Operate from your garage, basement, etc. Work as many hours as you wish—the appliance repairman is his own boss. On many types of repairs it is usual for a repairman to charge on the basis of $5.00 to $6.00 an hour!

No Previous Experience Needed

Profusely illustrated our new course shows you in simple, easy to understand language plus drawings and photographs, how to make each repair on refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, motors, fans, irons, etc., etc. Explains and gives you a working knowledge of electricity, welding, nickel plating, etc. Shows you how to build the power tools you need and how to solicit and keep business coming to you. Not a theory course but an honest to goodness practical course written by and used by repairmen the country over. Price of course is so low that the savings on your own household appliances will pay for it. Act now! Send today for FREE literature. Christy Supply Co., 2835 N. Central Ave., Dept. D-2404, Chicago 34, Illinois.

LAW...

STUDY AT HOME Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before. **More Ability: More Prestige: More Money** We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send NOW.
LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn Street
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 2329-L Chicago 5, Ill.

PICTURE RING $1.

Exquisite Picture Ring—made from any photo. **SEND NO MONEY!** Mail photo with paper strip for ring size. Pay postman only $1 plus postage. Hand tinted 25c extra. Photo returned with ring. Money back guarantee.
PICTURE RING CO. SEND PHOTO AND RING SIZE NOW! Dept. W-26, CINCINNATI 2, Ohio

Made from Any Photo or Picture! SEND NO MONEY!

WHEN KIDNEYS Work Too Often

Are you embarrassed and inconvenienced by too frequent elimination during the day or night? This symptom as well as Smarting Passages, Backache, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Rheumatic Pains and Swollen Ankles may be due to non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles. In such cases the very first dose of the scientifically compounded medicine called Cystex usually goes to work right now helping you these 3 ways: 1. Helps nature remove irritating excess acids, poisonous wastes and certain germs. 2. This cleansing action helps nature alleviate many pains, aches, soreness and stiffness. 3. Helps reduce frequent night and day calls, thus promoting better sleep.

Get Cystex from your druggist today. Give it a fair trial as directed on package. Money back guaranteed unless Cystex satisfies you.

Bill Coy copped the steer wrestling, Oscar Bachand was second, Len Jacobs was third and Jim Humphrey was fourth.

On the final day the winners of the wild horse race were — First, Jiggs Thompson; Second, Geo. Tivis; Third, Buck Towton; Fourth, Len Jacobs.

Houston 1948 Exhibition

The 1948 Houston, Texas, Fat Stock Show and Rodeo, in setting the dates January 31st to February 15th, will have the longest show ever staged in Houston, four days longer than in previous years. It will be operated in two sections, or phases, a market show to open January 31st, and a breeding show to begin February 9th, which is the day following the close of the Fort Worth Fat Stock Show, which has moved its dates up from the usual March dates into the dates usually occupied by the Houston show.

The action of extending the dates of the Houston show was taken by the directors upon the recommendation of W. O. Cox, general manager, after unsuccessful efforts by Fort Worth and Houston show representatives to adjust a conflict of dates.

Twenty-two rodeo performances are scheduled for the Houston show, including sixteen nights and six matinees. World's Championship Rodeo Corporation, Gene Autry and Associates have signed a contract to produce the rodeo, with Everett Colborn, managing director, in personal charge of producing the rodeo. This firm produced both the Fort Worth and Houston rodeos this year, but with both going on at the same time next year the Fort Worth show will in all probability be produced by Verne Elliott.

John S. Kuykendall, founder and chairman for three years of the Brownwood, Texas, Livestock Show, has accepted the position as assistant manager of the Houston Fat Stock Show. He succeeds Herman Engle, who was assistant manager of the show, then advanced to manager. Engle has been named as manager of the newly organized Fat Stock Show in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where the first annual show of the new organization will be staged in March.

Rodeo Notes

Curtis Lamar, steer roper from Norman, Oklahoma, was fatally injured at the Mangum, Oklahoma, Rodeo. The accident occur-

red during the steer roping of the final performance, when Curtis was thrown from his horse.

Cliff Lewis, a former rodeo contestant and excellent calf roper, has been in the automobile business in Detroit for a unmber of years, during which time he has not contested at rodeos. Cliff entered the calf roping at the Roy Rogers Rodeo in Detroit but soon found that the long layoff had made him unable to compete with any success with the fast competition displayed in the Rogers contest. Three times out and not being able to dab his loop on a single calf, Cliff withdrew from the contest, as he was looked upon as a tenderfoot by the vast audience when he was announced as being from Detroit. His chasing the calves and failing to catch them caused much laughter in the audience, and having been good in his time, Cliff did not feel like acting as a clown for the amusement of the rodeo fans.

The Roy Rogers Championship Rodeo opened its fall tour at the Arena in Philadel-

[*Turn page*]

America's Most Entertaining Picture Magazine!

Packed with Fascinating Photo Features!

NOW ON SALE—15c AT ALL STANDS!

AUTO BOOKS ON APPROVAL

SEND NO MONEY. Just mail the coupon for a complete set of 4 Big, Thick Auto Books. 20th Edition. 2800 Pages! Whether you are a mechanic or helper, expert or apprentice, auto owner or driver, take immediate advantage of this FREE EXAMINATION OFFER.

MAKE GOOD MONEY NOW HOLD A PERMANENT JOB

America wants its automobiles kept in good repair. Men with "know how" are in demand, at big pay. These books will help you get and hold an important job, or give you a chance to go into business for yourself now or later. Any man who half tries to improve himself can learn auto servicing and repairing by this quick reference method. Use the JIFFY INDEX to find easily understood answer to any auto problem. These wonder books prepared by eleven of America's great automobile engineers. Many hundreds of valuable illustrations. Send the coupon TODAY.

CAN YOU FIX IT?

These wonder books tell step by step HOW to make difficult repairs and adjustments, how to keep a car at maximum efficiency, including latest improvements in car design and operation. Engine troubles and how to correct them well covered.

4 BIG, THICK VOLUMES

2800 pages, 2000 illustrations, wiring diagrams, etc., including Diesel engines. Beautiful modernistic, washable cloth binding.

[A year's consulting privileges with our engineers now given with these books without extra charge.]

Vocational Publishers Since 1898

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY, Dept. A249
Drexel Ave. at 58th St., Chicago 37, Ill.

I would like to examine your 4-Volume Set of Auto Books. I will pay the delivery charges only, but if I choose I may return them express collect. If after 10 days' use I prefer to keep them, I will send you $2 and pay the balance at the rate of only $3 a month until $24.80 has been paid. Include consulting service as offered above.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Please attach letter stating age, occupation, employer's name and address, and name and address of at least one business man as reference. Men in service, also please give home address.

STOP Scratching

Relieve Itch in a Jiffy

Sufferers from the torturing itch caused by eczema, pimples, scales, scabies, athlete's foot, "factory" itch, and other itch troubles, are praising cooling, liquid **D.D.D. Prescription.** This time-proved medication—developed by Dr. D.D. Dennis—positively relieves that cruel, burning itch. Greaseless and stainless. Soothes and comforts even the most intense itching in a jiffy. A 35c trial bottle proves its merits or your money back. Ask your druggist today for **D. D. D. Prescription.**

TOOTHACHE?

GET QUICK AMAZING RELIEF by placing Dent's Tooth Gum—or Drops—in cavity of aching tooth. Cavity toothache frequently strikes when you can't see dentist. Be prepared! Ask your druggist for either complete aid package. Follow directions.

25¢

DENT'S TOOTH GUM TOOTH DROPS

Saves Costly Redecorating

AMAZING INVENTION. Banishes old-style housecleaning mess and muss. No rags—no sticky "dough"—no red, swollen hands. No more dangerous stepladders. Literally erases dirt like magic from Wallpaper, Painted Walls, Ceilings, Window Shades. *Take orders from friends! Earn money!* Act now!

SAMPLES FOR TRIAL Sample offer sent immediately to all who send name at once. A penny postal will do. SEND NO MONEY—*just your name.* **KRISTEE CO., 1472 Bar Street, AKRON, OHIO**

NOW a DYNAMIC HEAVY DUTY INDUSTRIAL WELDER ONLY $28.50 COMPLETE

FOR AUTO—HOME APPLIANCE & FARM IMPLEMENT REPAIRS! WORKS ON IRON, STEEL & other metals . . . does work you'd expect from a larger, costlier machine; portable, easily carried; OPERATES FROM ANY properly wired 110 VOLT LINE. Also available for 220 volt operation at slight additional cost; has 8 metalic & carbon arc welding heat stages. EASY TO OPERATE TRANSFORMER TYPE WELDER—If inexperienced you can learn to do professional work by following the SIMPLIFIED WELDING & OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS FURNISHED—comes complete ready to operate with helmet, rods, cable, instructions. SAVE TIME AND MONEY—Do your own welding—Just a few repair jobs will pay for this machine. A practical and profitable machine tool for any workshop. Make money doing repair work for others. Write today for full particulars and 10 DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER.
DYNAMIC WELDER CO., 13 E. 23rd St., TE, Chicago 16, Ill.

LEARN AT HOME TO MOUNT BIRDS

Animals, Heads, Fishes, Pets; to TAN. Be a Taxidermist. Profit and FUN. Hunters, save your valuable TROPHIES. Mount ducks, squirrels, everything. Learn to TAN for leather and furs. Wonderful HOBBY Have a HOME MUSEUM. BIG PROFITS mounting for others. INVESTIGATE NOW.

FREE BOOK With 100 fine game pictures, NOW absolutely FREE. Write TODAY.
Send Postal TODAY for FREE BOOK. State AGE.
N. W. SCHOOL OF TAXIDERMY, Dept. 4172, Omaha, Neb.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946, of West, published monthly at Chicago, Ill., for October 1, 1947. State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared H. L. Herbert, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of West, and that the following is, to best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations), printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Better Publications, Inc., 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y.; Editor, G. B. Farnum, 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y.; Managing Editor, None; Business Manager, H. L. Herbert, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. 2. That the owner is: Better Publications, Inc., 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y.; N. L. Pines, 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. H. L. Herbert, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1947. Eugene Wechsler, Notary Public. My commission expires March 30, 1948.

phia. The rodeo is a combination of Col. Jim Eskew's JE Ranch Rodeo, stock and features, and the Rogers importations from Hollywood, which consist of himself and Trigger, his movie horse, Dale Evans, his leading lady, Bob Nolan and the Sons of the Pioneers.

Miss Evans and the Sons of the Pioneers work with Roy in his singing numbers. Roy makes three appearances during each performance. He dashes out on Trigger at the opening and welcomes everybody to the rodeo, introduces Dale Evans and the show proceeds. He comes back for his singing numbers and in this appearance also does some fancy revolver shooting, then he returns again with Trigger, putting the horse through his tricks and dances at the finale of the show.

Among the specialty acts and contract performers are Jack Andrews and his trained Brahma bull "Henry," John Crethers and his mule "Mickey Mouse," Ted Allen, horseshoe pitcher, Chief Swift In Hand and 25 Sioux Indians, Marvin Hoover and his bucking Ford, Mary Parks and Eva Rogers in cowgirls' bronc riding exhibitions, Buddy Mefford, Rex Rossi and Jim Eskew, Jr., in fancy roping.

Brahma Rogers and John Crethers are the clowns and Felix Cooper and Fess Reynolds, "bull fighters." Ted Warhol, Jimmy Miller, Rex Rossi, Beryl Jackson, Billie Shaw, Joan Oviatt and Adair Shaw appear in trick riding.

The judges at Philadelphia were Ole Rice and A. J. Greening, arena secretary Bob Matthews, timer Mary Parks, arena director Col. Jim Eskew.

Final Results at Philly

The final results in calf roping were—First, Junior Turner; Second, Herschel Romine; Third, Lawrence Davis; Fourth, Buck Dowell.

Ted Warhol won the bareback bronc riding, Jimmy Sloan was second, Paul Gould was third and Dude Smith fourth. Steve Heacock and G. K. Lewallen tied for first and second places in the saddle bronc riding, Red Wilmer was third and Chuck Dent fourth. Buck Dowell copped the steer wrestling, Ole Rice was second, Steve Heacock was third and Bill Lawrence was fourth. Ink Grimsley was best man in the bull riding, Dude Smith was second, Jerry Jerrell was third and Bunky Crethers fourth.

Well, cowhands, that is about all we can

dish up at the old Chuck Wagon this trip, but we will be seeing you again about the same time next month. *Adios.*

—FOGHORN CLANCY

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

BEFORE a volcano cuts loose, it usually spends some time sort of talkin' to itself—boiling and bubbling down below, and now and then h'istin' its shoulders, getting set for action! After a while it gets to the bustin' point, and then—gangway, here I come!

It's like that, too, with animals—pawing dirt over both shoulders, the way bulls do, before they charge—and with men, calling each other names, shoving each other around, before they really get going good in the old knock-down-and-drag-out stuff.

It was that way before the Civil War. Most folks don't know it, or don't stop to think of it, but that terrific struggle didn't just bust on a peaceful world all of a sudden, without warning. Some mighty exciting events led up to the firing on Fort Sumter, and it's only too bad that more good stories haven't been written about those times. That's why we're more than glad to be bringing you Harry Rubicam, Jr.'s, fine novel, IRON TAIL'S ARROW, in the next issue.

You don't often think of Colorado in connection with the Civil War. But—says the author—the bitterness that had divided Colorado into two armed camps, setting neighbor against neighbor in a deadly feud, flamed into open warfare the day Joe Dennison rode into Russell Gulch to chop firewood and never came back.

Bill Gillaine, his trapping partner and life-

[*Turn page*]

INTERESTING JOBS — GOOD PAY—EARN WHILE YOU LEARN—A BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN, are just a few of the opportunities awaiting you as a Trained National Radio, Television and Electronic Expert. Broadcasting, Radio Service, and other specialized phases are constantly demanding more and more trained men. Get all the facts about this GREAT FIELD. ACT AT ONCE!

SHOP METHOD HOME TRAINING
By a Real Established Resident Trade School With Classrooms, FM Studios, Shops and Laboratories

gives you the knowledge, skill, and experience that assure definite progress—step-by-step for a brighter, more prosperous future. You Learn by Doing. Build a standard LONG DISTANCE SUPERHETERODYNE RECEIVER as shown above, an audio oscillator, a signal generator (low powered Radio transmitter) and many other units and experiments with equipment furnished you in your home. National Graduates everywhere have qualified, through spare time study for well-paying jobs, success and security in Radio. It is a field with a proved future. Find out what this industry offers National Trained Service Engineers, Operators and Technicians. Take the first step to greater success NOW by sending coupon below—TODAY! G.I. APPROVED

FREE LESSON

NATIONAL SCHOOLS
LOS ANGELES 37, CALIFORNIA

MAIL COUPON

National Schools, Dept. TG-2
4000 S. Figueroa Los Angeles 37, Calif.

Mail me sample lesson and book FREE. Paste on a post card

NAME.....AGE.....
ADDRESS.....
CITY.....ZONE.....STATE.....
☐ Check here if Veteran of World War II

Learn BAKING At Home

Baking is one of America's high industries in wages. Nearly depression-proof. Thorough basic home course lays sound foundation. If you have aptitude, write for FREE BOOKLET. "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."
National Baking School, 1315 Mich. Ave., Dept. 1802, Chicago 5

Asthma Coughs

Don't let coughing, sneezing, choking recurring attacks of Bronchial Asthma ruin sleep and energy another day without trying **Mendaco**. This great internal medicine is tasteless and taken exactly as directed works thru the blood, thus reaching the bronchial tubes and lungs. Usually starts helping nature immediately to remove thick, sticky mucus, thus alleviating coughing and promoting freer breathing and more refreshing sleep. Get **Mendaco** from your druggist today. Money back guaranteed unless completely satisfied.

1948 GOVERNMENT JOBS!

$1,756 to $3,021 FIRST YEAR

RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS

Veterans Get Special Preference

Many other Government Jobs. City and Rural Carriers—Postoffice Clerks—Patrol Inspectors—Accountant—Stenographers—Typists—etc. Prepare Now for next Examinations.

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE,
Dept. R94, Rochester 4, N. Y.

Sirs: Rush to me, without charge, copy of 32-page book, "How to get a U. S. Government Job," list of positions, and full particulars telling how to prepare for them.

Name.....

Address.....Vet?.....

Free for Asthma During Winter

If you suffer with attacks of Asthma and choke and gasp for breath, if restful sleep is difficult because of the struggle to breathe, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Company for a FREE trial of the FRONTIER ASTHMA MEDICINE, a preparation of temporary symptomatic relief of paroxysms of Bronchial Asthma. No matter where you live or whether you have faith in any medicine under the sun, send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Caution! Use only as directed. Address

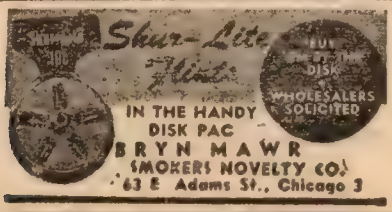
FRONTIER ASTHMA CO. 222-B FRONTIER BLDG.
462 NIAGARA ST. BUFFALO 1, N. Y.

BE A DETECTIVE

WORK HOME or TRAVEL. Experience unnecessary. DETECTIVE Particulars FREE. Write to GEO. R. H. WAGNER, 125 W. 86th St., N. Y.

What Every Mason Wants

We have Important Masonic books for Blue Lodge, Chapter, Commandery, Scottish Rite, and Shrine.
OUR RITUALS ARE USED THE WORLD OVER
Send for free catalog of books and rituals for Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Knights of Columbus, etc.
EZRA A. COOK, Publisher, P. O. 796, GF, Chicago 90, Ill.



TOMBSTONES

DIRECT TO YOU $9.95 up EASY Terms

Genuine Beautiful **Rockdale Monuments, Markers.** Satisfaction or MONEY BACK. Freight paid. Write for our FREE Catalog and compare prices.

ROCKDALE MONUMENT CO.
Dept. 110 JOLIET, ILLINOIS

If Ruptured Try This Out

Modern Protection Provides Great Comfort and Holding Security

Without Torturous Truss Wearing

An "eye-opening" revelation in sensible and comfortable reducible rupture protection may be yours for the asking, without cost or obligation. Simply send name and address to William S. Rice, Inc., Dept. I-L, Adams, N. Y., and full details of the new and different Rice Method will be sent you Free. Without hard flesh-gouging pads or tormenting pressure, here's a Support that has brought joy and comfort to thousands—by releasing them from Trusses with springs and straps that bind and cut. Designed to securely hold a rupture up and in where it belongs and yet give freedom of body and genuine comfort. For full information—write today!

long friend, was not alarmed until Dennison's horse came galloping up to the cabin with the stirrups flopping crazily against the empty saddle. Then Gillaine tossed a saddle on his own horse and rode hard for the gulch. He found his partner's body sprawled awkwardly in the trail, and a long, feathered arrow was buried half its length above Joe Dennison's heart.

As he studied the arrow, Gillaine recognized it as belonging to an old Cheyenne warrior named Iron Tail. Each Indian had a private marking for his shafts so that other Indians would know which animals he had killed while hunting, and to which scalps he was entitled on the war trail. Bill Gillaine knew Iron Tail's mark well, for he had hunted with the old Indian many times. It was Iron Tail who had taught him to speak the Cheyenne language.

And the strange thing about it was that the two young partners had been friendly with the Cheyennes for years. Iron Tail would have had no reason to kill Joe. Or, if he had, would he have done such a fool thing as to leave one of his arrows behind by which to identify him? Hardly! There was more here, Gillaine decided, than met the eye.

But, vivid in Bill Gillaine's mind now as he stared down at the body of his friend, was the memory of a thrown bowie knife hissing out of the dark to thud into the wood of their cabin door, not long before. A note had come with the knife. "You rebels better clear out!" it warned bluntly.

Georgians by birth, the two young trappers were Confederates, and made no bones of the fact. And one day at the sawmill in the Black Forest, they had heard rumors that certain Southern men living in Denver City were recruiting a Confederate force to fight the Sons of Liberty—the latter being a secret society of Union men sworn to rid Colorado of Confederate sympathizers.

Well, when they heard about that projected Confederate force, Joe Dennison had said right out loud that he considered this a good idea. And then a Yankee taunted Joe on his Confederate leanings, and called him a Rebel, and a fight ensued. Dennison gave the man a sound beating. And it wasn't long after that when the thrown knife whammed into their door.

But there was more to come! One night, about a week after Gillaine had buried his partner's body, something struck the door

with a quick, swishing "chunk," and then Gillaine heard hoofbeats that rattled off down the trail. This time the note said:

"Listen, you ain't wanted here. This is a last warning. Get out."

For some time Gillaine had been trying to make up his mind whether to stay or to go to Denver and join the Confederate regiment. Now—

"They can't scare me out of this country with their warnings," he told himself. "I'll leave this cabin when I get durned good and ready."

He loaded his long rifle and counted out a supply of ammunition. Then he banked the fire for the night, unlaced his buckskins and stretched out in his bunk.

That night they came. They announced their arrival by setting fire to his haystacks. And right then, hombres and gals, things began to happen. Right then, the old volcano began to bubble and boil, and to heave against the rock that held it. Both sides, the North and the South, were trying to enlist the aid of the Indians, for it could make a tremendous difference, when the fight was joined, to have those tough, rampaging savages doing their stuff for you.

Guns began to roar, the noise cutting through the blood-chilling whoop of redskins on the warpath. Scalps were lifted, dripping blood even as the whole horrible situation dripped the aroused hate of brother against brother. The lid blew off. Four years of horror began!

It's all in IRON TAIL'S ARROW, by Harry Rubicam, Jr., a yarn so vivid that we'll wager you don't put down the magazine until you've read the last word of it!

But you've just fairly begun your carnival

[*Turn page*]

196 PAGES

OF BRAND-NEW ACTION STORIES BY TOP-FLIGHT AUTHORS IN

GIANT WESTERN

•

Now on Sale — 25c At All Stands!

I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME IN SPARE HOURS TO BE A **RADIO SERVICE MAN!**

I SEND YOU 8 BIG KITS OF RADIO PARTS!

SPRAYBERRY ACADEMY of RADIO

FREE MAIL COUPON FOR CATALOG and Sample Lesson

LEARN by Working with Your Hands *Building, Testing, Repairing Radios*

Get the facts about the Sprayberry Course . . . find out why it's the **best** Radio Training for you. See how I train you by sending you 8 big kits of real, professional Radio parts—how I train you to build a powerful 6 tube superhet radio, a 16 range test meter and perform over 175 interesting, instructive *Radio* experiments. My training is *practical*—it sticks with you, helps make money for you. You don't need previous schooling or experience. **YOU LEARN BY DOING**—following simple, easy lessons that teach you RADIO from the ground up.

Get Sample Lesson FREE

ACT TODAY! Fill out and rush the coupon to me—I'll send you my FREE BOOK, "How to Make Money in Radio, Electronics and Television," and also valuable Sample Lesson, "How to Read Radio Diagrams and Symbols." I'll also tell how you can Earn While You Learn. **VETERANS:** Approved for G.I. Training under Public Laws 16 and 346.

SPRAYBERRY ACADEMY OF RADIO
528 SPRAYBERRY BLDG., PUEBLO, COLO.
F. L. Sprayberry, President

Rush my FREE Sample Lesson and Book.
☐ VETERAN ☐ NON-VETERAN

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ Zone____ STATE_____

DO YOU WANT TO **STOP TOBACCO?**

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with Tobacco Redeemer. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men. Caution: Use only as directed.

30 Years in Business

FREE BOOK

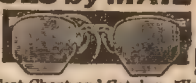
THE NEWELL COMPANY
153 Clayton, Sta., St. Louis 5, Mo.

GET EYE-GLASSES *by MAIL*

Send No Money!

16-DAY TRIAL Offer

NEWEST STYLES



NEW LOW PRICES

Send for **FREE** Scientific Sight Test Chart and Catalog. Write today.

U.S. EYE-GLASSES CO. 1557 MILWAUKEE AVENUE Dept. 2-82, CHICAGO 22, ILL.

DRAW for MONEY!

Be An ARTIST!

Trained Artists are Capable of Earning $50, $60, $75 a Week

It's pleasant and interesting to study Art the W.S.A. way. **COMMERCIAL ART, DESIGNING, CARTOONING** all in ONE complete home study course. No previous Art experience necessary—hundreds have profited by our practical methods since 1914. TWO ART OUTFITS furnished. Full information in FREE BOOK. "Art for Pleasure and Profit." Write today.

Veterans! Course available under "G.I." Bill.

FREE BOOK gives details

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART,
Studio 662-M, 1115 15th St., N. W.
Washington 5, D. C.

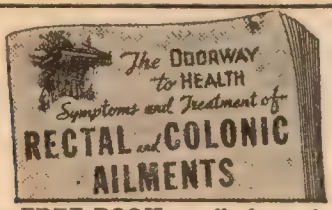
Name.....

Street.....Age.....

City.....Zone ( ) State.....

Learn Health Facts

FREE BOOK on Ailments



40-page FREE BOOK — tells facts about Colon Troubles, Constipation, Stomach Conditions, Rectal Abscesses and Ulcers. Thornton & Minor Clinic, Suite 256, 926 McGee, Kansas City, Mo.

RUPTURE!

An amazing Air-Cushion Invention allows body freedom at work or play. Light, neat, cool, sanitary. Durable, cheap. Day and night protection helps Nature support weakened muscles gently but surely. No risk. **Sent on Trial!** Write NOW for free Booklet and **Proof of Results.** All correspondence confidential.

Brooks Company, 183 State St., Marshall, Mich.

A Penny May Bring You HAPPINESS!

Would you gamble a penny to win Happiness, Companionship, Love, Financial Success, through the help of a mysterious International Secret Organization? Then just send name and address on a post-card TODAY for your **FREE** Copy of great Book "Mayan Mysteries". It can change your whole life! Address Rose Dawn, The Mayan order, Dept. 528, P. O. Box 2710, San Antonio, Tex.

3 In 1 AIR PISTOL

SPORTSMAN JR.—Sensational, low-priced air pistol. Ruggedly built, full size target gun shoots either standard BBs, pellets or steel darts. Fast, single-action compression chamber. Single shot, silent shooting. Use indoors or outdoors. Modeled after famous target pistol. Economical to operate. Die cast all metal non-slip moulded grip; machined steel chamber and barrel. 8-in. long; 4½-in. deep; full size, weighs 15 oz. EACH **$3.49**

$3.49

BBs, 3 pks. 25c; .177 pellets, 500 for $1.50; steel darts, 35c package. Order Plenty of Ammunition.

No C.O.D.

JOHNSON SMITH & COMPANY, Dept. B-36, Detroit 7, Michigan

Kills Lice, Ants, Fleas, Aphids, Bedbugs, Crab Lice, Potato Bugs, Bean Beetles

DUST ON ONE SPOT *Guaranteed by Manufacturer*

One-Spot Co. Jessup, Md.

True Picture-Stories of Famous Heroes in

REAL LIFE COMICS

Approved by Parents and Teachers

Now On Sale—Only 10c At All Stands!

of good reading when you've finished the novel. FANGS FOR A SUN GOD will be in the same issue, too. This is another of the popular White Phantom stories, and in it Harold F. Cruickshank tells you of grim, terrible battle between Olak, the Wolf King, and Mus-kwa, the sun god bear, up in the wilds of the grim Valley of Forgotten Men. Great stories, these White Phantom yarns, and when those two fierce enemies, the bear and the wolf, each a king in his own right, get at it, claw and fang, brother, you'll chew your nails to the quick a-readin' about it.

Zorro will be with us, too, in this fine issue of WEST. This time ZORRO MEETS A WIZARD, and what happens then is mighty entertaining.

You've read a lot, from time to time, about the ruinous stripping of our forest lands. It's all summed up in an article by Syl MacDowell, titled WOODEN WEALTH, that you'll want to read because this is a matter of vital importance to every one of us, and to our children and our children's children.

Other short stories, too, and departments and features, all of it adding up to one bang-up gala number of WEST.

LETTER BOX

AND now here comes the postman in his old jaloppy, and durned if he ain't stoppin' at our gate!

"Howdy, Cy."

"Howdy, you ring-tailed old river pirate, grab this here bale of mail 'fore my springs bust down! An' hurry, so's I kin get acrost Madison Avenue 'fore the light changes."

That's how she goes. You folks writin', us receivin' and readin'. Step up and meet some folks who wrote us:

I am a regular reader of WEST, and have been for some time, so I guess I had better write my likes and dislikes. I like the longer stories best, but as I am an old coal miner sometimes a short story comes in handy to read when my reading time is limited. The novel, BURY ME NOT, was tops. So keep them coming, and don't try to suit me. If you suit others, I'm sure to get by.—*Boyd Marshall, Pennington Gap, Va.*

The current number of WEST is interesting reading all the way through, special attention being drawn to BURY ME NOT, ZORRO MEETS A ROGUE, Foghorn Clancy, etc. BURY ME NOT is especially interesting. Allan R. Bosworth did a good job in enlisting and holding the interest

of the reader. I will anxiously await the appearance of the next issue of WEST.—*Lewis Barney Fretz, Gardena, Calif.*

I have enjoyed the Zorro stories for many years, and think that Mr. McCulley is a wonderful writer. So many of your readers want Zorro in longer stories that I think it would be a great idea to put him in a magazine all of his own. It would be nice to have his picture on the cover of your magazine.—*John Clayton, Rogers, Arkansas.*

I enjoy reading WEST very much and so does my husband. I have just finished reading HANGMAN'S HARVEST and think it is the best story ever published. I also like Zorro. As far as I'm concerned, I don't like the White Phantom stories.—*(Mrs.) Euona Mullins, Jonesboro, Tenn.*

I have greatly enjoyed your stories, including the adventures of the White Phantom. But you always make the wolf tribe out as heroes, and apparently forget about the other side of their nature, especially the well corroborated reports that the kin of Olak and Sanyek are at the present time ravaging the herds of our finest big game. It might be well to remind folks of a few extremely unpleasant truths about the lupine tribe.—*John Edwards, Pond Eddy, N. Y.*

The Zorro stories make me sick. Why can't the guy just once in a while get into a really bad spot and show us he's man enough to get out of it? He's always going around whipping somebody, but does he ever go up against anyone that could really shoot back? Not Zorro. Some fat, popeyed politician is about his size.—*Jim Gregory, Dallas, Texas.*

I have been reading WEST for some time. I have just finished HANGMAN'S HARVEST and like it very much. The best story I ever read in your magazine was THE RIDER OF LOST CREEK by Jim Mayo. SPURS was also very good. I have just read the summary of A MAN CALLED TRENT, coming up in the next issue, and I am sure this will be one of your best stories.—*Darrel Arthur, Iron Springs, Alberta, Canada.*

You said write you, so I am writing you. I have been reading WEST for years, and have found it the best of the book length magazines. Every month a new kind of adventure. There has never been what I'd call a bad number of WEST. I have remembered such novels as SPURS, by Gladwell Richardson, OLD TEXAS DAYS, by Larry Harris, THE FRONTIER DOCTOR by Bradford Scott, and lots more. I also like the short stories and features, especially the features.—*Donald Gurley, Newman, Ga.*

That's all of it for this time, folks. More next month. And don't forget to write us. Just address The Editor, West, 10 East Fortieth Street, New York 16, N. Y. *Adios, y muchas gracias* and the best of everything to all of you.

—THE EDITOR

Learn this Profitable Profession

IN 90 DAYS AT HOME

MONEY-MAKING CAREER OPEN to MEN and WOMEN, 18 to 50

Hundreds of men and women between 18 and 50 make $10 to $20 in a single day giving Scientific Swedish Massage and Hydro-Therapy treatments. There is big demand from doctors, hospitals, sanatoriums and clubs. Graduates earn large full time incomes from these or in private practice in their own offices. Others make good money from home treatments given in spare time. Learn this interesting, money-making profession in your own home, through our home study course. Same instructors as in our nationally known resident school. You can win independence and prepare for future security by qualifying for our Diploma. Course can be completed in 3 to 4 months. Many earn while they learn. Begin your training at once.

Anatomy Charts & Booklet FREE

Enroll now and we will include, at no extra cost, many needed supplies. Fit yourself to help meet growing demand for Scientific Swedish Massage. Send the coupon at once for complete details. Anatomy Charts and 32-page Illustrated Booklet, FREE, postpaid.

THE COLLEGE OF SWEDISH MASSAGE
Dept. 863-B, 100 East Ohio St., Chicago 11, Illinois

Please send me FREE and postpaid, Anatomy Charts, 32-page Booklet and complete details on Home Training.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

LAW STUDY AT HOME for PERSONAL SUCCESS and LARGER EARNINGS. 39 years expert instruction—over 108,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All texts furnished. Easy payments. G.I. Approved. Send for FREE BOOK.
AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW
Dept. 85-T, 646 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill.

STUN Your FRIENDS With GENUINE DIAMOND LIKE ZIRCONS

Sparkling, "Brilliant-White" zircon gems, all sizes, from far-off Siam; cut, polished, mounted just like diamonds. You will be amazed at their diamond-like appearance—it's hard for even experts to tell the difference. Exquisitely smart settings 14K yellow or white gold—over a hundred gorgeous latest-style rings to choose from. Top quality. Attractive low prices. Send for FREE CATALOG. U. S. ZIRCON SYNDICATE
139 N. Clark St. Dept. ZC-28 Chicago 2, Ill.

What To Do For Pains of ARTHRITIS Try This Free

If you have never used "Rosse Tabs" for pains or arthritis, neuritis, rheumatism, we want you to try them at our risk. We will send you a full-size package from which you are to use 24 Tabs FREE. If not astonishedsat the palliative relief which you enjoy from your sufferings, return the package and you owe us nothing. We mean it! SEND NO MONEY. Just send name and address and we will rush your Tabs by return mail. ROSSE PRODUCTS CO. Dept. 194, 2708 Farwell Ave., Chicago 45, Illinois.

WHICH OF THESE *EXCITING* BOOKS DO YOU WANT?

Now you can enjoy many hours of exciting reading pleasure at a small fraction of the original cost. The Popular Library reprints bring you word-for-word, page-for-page books of proved popularity in durable reprints. Take your choice of the titles listed below.

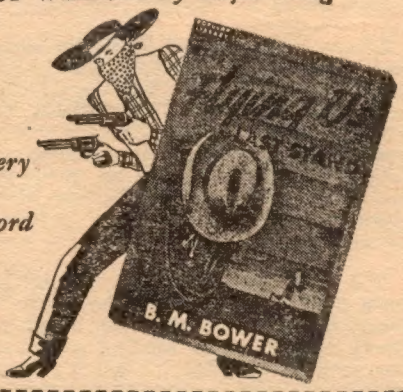
ONLY 25¢ EACH

- **EVERY ONE A FULL-SIZED VOLUME!**
- **EVERY ONE A FAMOUS BEST SELLER!**
- **EVERY ONE ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AT $2 OR MORE PER COPY!**

POPULAR LIBRARY *Mysteries*

- 113 CRUCIBLE *by Ben Ames Williams*
- 111 BEDELIA *by Vera Caspary*
- 87 FATAL DESCENT *by John Rhode & Carter Dickson*
- 63 SING A SONG OF HOMICIDE *by James R. Langham*
- 65 THE WOMAN IN THE PICTURE *by John August*
- 67 MURDER ON THE YACHT *by Rufus King*
- 69 THE LISTENING HOUSE *by Mabel Seeley*
- 98 DIVIDEND ON DEATH *by Brett Halliday*
- 97 A VARIETY OF WEAPONS *by Rufus King*

POPULAR LIBRARY *Westerns*



- 119 FIREBRAND *by Tom Gill*
- 103 THE PHANTOM CANOE *by William Byron Mowery*
- 114 RAMROD *by Luke Short*
- 104 MESQUITE JENKINS, TUMBLEWEED *by C. E. Mulford*
- 118 THE FLYING U'S LAST STAND *by B. M. Bower*
- 128 THE VOICE OF THE PACK *by Edison Marshall*
- 134 FIGHTING BLOOD *by Gordon Young*

POPULAR LIBRARY *Specials*

- 102 DUEL IN THE SUN *by Niven Busch*
- 110 CONGO SONG *by Stuart Cloete*
- 94 THE MORTAL STORM *by Phyllis Bottome*
- 115 POPULAR BOOK OF CARTOONS
- 107 CROSSWORD PUZZLES
- 91 THE SEA-HAWK *by Rafael Sabatini*
- 101 LUMMOX *by Fannie Hurst*

ORDER BY NUMBER
MAIL COUPON TODAY!

POPULAR LIBRARY, INC., Dept. TFG-2
10 East 40th St., New York 16, N. Y.

Send me postpaid the Popular Library books I have circled. I enclose 25c (in coin* or in U. S. stamps of small denominations) per copy (NOTE: We pay postage on orders for 4 books or more. If ordering less than 4 books, please enclose 5c per book extra for postage.)

87	134	98	103	63	111	115	91
128	101	104	65	113	118	94	97
108	107	110	114	119	67	69	

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY & ZONE.....STATE.....

Now ANY AUTO REPAIR JOB Can Be "Duck Soup" For You!

MoToR's New AUTO REPAIR MANUAL Shows You How to Service and Repair ANY Part of ANY Car!

FREE 7-DAY OFFER!

NOW you can "polish off" the HARDEST jobs the EASIEST way! MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL is ready to show you how to repair anything from carburetor to rear end — with the *least* possible amount of time and effort!

Suppose plain-talking car engineers from every auto plant in America got together and showed you all the things you needed to know about repairing and servicing the cars *they* had designed and manufactured! That's really what you get in this big manual! Right at your fingertips, the main "dope" from *150 Official Factory Shop Manuals*, covering every make car built since 1935!

Easy to use, too! Quick-index leads you to right page in jiffy! Just follow simple instructions step-by-step.

SEE HOW MUCH YOU GET!

856 pages, 8½x11", bound in sturdy covers. 200,000 service repair, adjustment, replacement, tune-up facts on all makes and models, built from 1935 through 1946! More than 1000 cutaway photos, diagrams, drawings show you exactly WHAT to do and HOW to do it. Used by U.S. Army, trade and technical schools everywhere, thousands of auto servicemen.

Now YOU — without cost — can see for yourself what a wonderful MoToR's Auto Repair Manual really is. Try it—FREE for 7 days! Learn first-hand how it can pay for itself the first few times you use it.

Covers All These Makes!

American Bantam, Auburn, Austin, Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Cord, Crosley, De Soto, Dodge, Ford, Graham, Hudson, Hupmobile, Lafayette, La Salle, Lincoln, Lincoln Zephyr, Mercury, Nash, Overland, Oldsmobile, Packard, Pierce Arrow, Plymouth, Pontiac, Reo, Studebaker, Terraplane, Willys

Clear, Pictured Facts on Every Job on Every Car Built Since 1935!

Nearly 200,000 service and repair facts of all 31 makes. 856 big pages including 50 pages of carburetor text, charts, illustrations, covering all models. Over 500 charts, tables; Tune-up Chart; Valve Measurements; Compression Pressure; Torque Wrench Reading; Starting Motor; Engine Clearances; Generator; Clutch and Brake Specifications; Front End Measurements, etc., Engines; Electric, Fuel, Cooling, Lubricating Systems; Transmissions; Universals; Front Ends; Wheels; Rear Ends, etc.

Same FREE 7-Day Offer Applies on MoToR's TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL

For mechanics, truck specialists, service stations, fleet owners. Covers EVERY job on EVERY truck made since 1936! 1400 pictures, 952 pages, 300,000 facts. Used by Armed Forces.

All types Gasoline Engines, Diesels, Hesselman. **Fuel Systems, Governors, Lubrication Systems, Ignition Systems, Starters, Generators, Clutches, Transmissions, Axles, Torque Dividers, Transfer Cases, Brakes, Steering,** etc.

ALSO SERVICES buses, farm and industrial tractors, contractor and road building equipment, stationary power machinery, etc. (on all parts described in Manual). Check box in coupon at right.

SEND NO MONEY

7-Day Free Examination

Just mail coupon at right, without money! When the postman brings your book, pay him nothing. First make it show you what it's got! Unless you agree this is the greatest time-saver and work-saver you've ever seen —return book in 7 days and pay nothing. Mail coupon today! Address: MoToR Book Dept. Desk 64B, 572 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

Published by MoToR, The Leading Automotive Business Magazine, MoToR's manuals assure high standards repair work.

MAIL COUPON NOW FOR 7-DAY FREE TRIAL

MoToR Book Dept., Desk 64B,
572 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

Rush to me at once: (check box opposite book you want).

☐ **MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL.** If O.K. I will remit $1 in 7 days, plus 35c delivery charge; $2 monthly for 2 months and a final payment of 95c a month later. (Price $5.95.) Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. **(Foreign price, remit $8 cash with order.)**

☐ **MoToR's TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL.** (Described at left.) If O.K. I will remit $2 in 7 days, and $2 monthly for 3 months, plus 35c delivery charges with final payment ($8.35 in all). Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. **(Foreign price, remit $10 cash with order.)**

Print Name..... Age.....

Print Address.....

Zone No.

City..... (if any).....

State..... Occupation.....

☐ **SAVE 35c!** Check here if enclosing full payt. (check, m.o.) WITH coupon. We then pay 35c shipping costs. Same 7-day return-refund privilege.

"The man knows how to make a drink sing, too!"

Expect to hear *your* praises sung when you serve Calvert highballs! For here is whiskey of *friendly* lightness... *gentle* whiskey blended to a gentleman's taste. And the flavor is marvelously mellow... richly satisfying. We suggest *you*, too, join the smart thousands switching to Calvert. Then you'll know why...

Clear Heads Choose Calvert

Calvert

BLENDED WHISKIES

Reserve OR *Special*

Choice Blended Whiskies, 86.8 Proof. Calvert "Reserve"—65% Grain Neutral Spirits
Calvert "Special"—72½% Grain Neutral Spirits. Calvert Distillers Corporation, N. Y. C.